

US-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS FROM THE 1952 REVOLUTION
TO THE SUEZ CRISIS OF 1956

Mohamed Abd El-Wahab Sayed-Ahmed

Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in Politics, in the Department
of Economic and Political Studies, School of Oriental and African
Studies, University of London

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ABSTRACT

If the late 1940s and early 1950s were a period of close and friendly relations between the United States and Egypt, the late 1950s and early 1960s mark the deterioration in those relations.

US-Egyptian relations from the 1952 revolution to the Suez crisis resembled to some extent a game of chess between Nasser of Egypt, and Secretary John Foster Dulles of the US.

The Free Officers' rise to power in Egypt in July 1952, raised the hope of the American policy-makers in the establishing of closer and, moreover, cordial relations with Egypt. They felt that it was to their advantage to deal with the military officers who were not associated with the corrupt ancien regime of politicians. Moreover, the Free Officers did not have any political commitment nor a predetermined position in foreign policy. Therefore the Eisenhower administration, especially Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, expected that Egypt under Nasser and his military colleagues would help achieve objectives of American strategy in the area, such as the containment of Soviet penetration, and peace between the Arab states and Israel. These hopes or aspirations, however, could not be easily translated into practical policy. Dulles looked to Nasser for support of US initiatives, without appreciating problems Nasser might face.

Nasser's policy was soon to clash with American strategy in the Middle East and Egypt's foreign policy would be marked to a great extent by recurrent clashes with the US, especially from 1955 onwards. Nasser saw US policy becoming reflexively pro-Israel and he felt that Washington was jeopardising his leadership of the Arab world, especially after the formation of the Baghdad Pact in February 1955. The honeymoon between the

Free Officers' regime in Egypt and the US was now over.

Nasser felt he had to confront the US and the Western powers on their own terms, in a more forceful and radical way. Nasser found the Soviet Union a willing partner in furthering his aims, even though he still left his options open regarding his relations with the US.

As for the Eisenhower administration, the turning-point came in mid-March 1956 when Secretary of the Navy Robert Anderson returned from his mission to promote peace between Egypt and Israel empty-handed. Dulles was determined to show Nasser how tough he could be. Events then moved rapidly to the Suez crisis.

The documentary and other evidence proved that Nasser's ambitions for a regional leadership of the Arab Middle East were in conflict with those of the US as a global power in the Middle East. The Eisenhower administration, for its part, had hoped and intended to contain Nasser's influence in the area and not to promote him into a major Third World leader, but in vain. The American policy turned Nasser from a local Arab leader of Egypt into the charismatic leader of the Arab world and a major political figure in the Third World.

This research mainly depends on American documents which were declassified during the past two years.

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To my son Sherif and his generation:

This is a real part of the Modern History of Egypt

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I remain solely responsible for factual errors and the views expressed in this study.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE FOOTNOTES

CAB	Cabinet papers
DDE	Dwight David Eisenhower
FO	Foreign Office
FR	Foreign Relations
HT	Harry S. Truman (Library)
Int. Series	International Series
NA	National Archives, Washington DC
NSC	National Security Council, Washington DC
OSANSA	The Sepcial Assistant for National Security Affairs
PREM	Prime Minister's office
RG	Record Group
WH	White House
WH,IN	White House, International series
WNRC	Washington National Record Centre (MD)

INTRODUCTION

It is man's nature to search the past, for there might have been paths and byways not seen which, if followed, might have prevented tragedy or have made the present safer. No historian defining recent events can ever resist this challenge and thereby offer advice – explicit or implicit – to those making decisions about how the present and the future should look. In our case, although United States-Egyptian relations from the 1952 Revolution to the Suez crisis of 1956 are a part of the past, there is no doubt that they had an impact upon the present as well as upon the future of world politics. Consequently, it is our purpose through our work to make this historical impact clear.

US-Egyptian relations during that period resembled a game of chess between Nasser of Egypt and Dulles of the US. The young Egyptian leader was aspiring at that time to the leadership of the Arab Middle East region, while John Foster Dulles, the American Secretary of State (1953-1959), was trying to reinforce United States global power. In other words, it was a kind of conflict between a regional and a global power, each trying to outmanoeuvre the other, believing it might eventually win.

This study aims at proving that in our rapidly changing world, small nations like Egypt under Nasser have had a growing influence on the course of world events. It became obvious that the major powers could no longer be assured of dictating the course of history. Nasser's foreign policy and his political ambitions, especially from 1955-1956, had proved that influence by the superpowers in certain regions could be constrained by the growing strength of the regional powers. Supposedly the most important political development of that epoch was that US

policy-makers had become obliged to pay a great deal of attention to the internal dynamics of Arab societies, as a prerequisite to influencing events there or projecting any kind of change in policy, thus being able to defend their interests. Secretary Dulles did not undertake to do this as he was totally preoccupied by the spread of communist ideology and the containment of Soviet expansionism in the area. Although the US had a political advantage over the Soviet Union in reducing regional conflicts and in promoting peace in the area (the US was trusted in most of the Arab countries, especially in Egypt under Nasser from 1952-1955, in a way that the Soviet Union was not), American strategy was flawed because its policy-makers viewed the Middle East region as an arena for their power struggle with the Soviet Union. America entertained the idea that smaller states like Egypt should accept the international geo-political arrangement that had been established by the end of the Second World War, and that they should not disturb this balance of world power.

It is a combination of reasons rather than a single reason that explains the choice of this era to be studied with respect to US-Egyptian relations. The first one relates to changes in the political-administrative dynamics of Egypt, the United States of America and also the Soviet Union. In July 1952 the Free Officers seized power in Egypt and overthrew the ancien régime. Not long after, in January 1953, the Eisenhower administration took office in the US after twenty years of Democratic control of the White House. What came to be known as Dulles' Era in American foreign policy was initiated, and the US attempted to exercise a new foreign policy in the Arab world. Eisenhower's Republican administration came to power at a time when the threat of communism,

and domestic pressure to contain it, had intensified, especially after the death of Stalin, when his successors attempted to confirm Russia's position as a superpower.

As we move from the level of the administrative changes to the main actors involved, it is interesting to observe that Nasser, who was the final arbiter on all Egyptian foreign policy matters from 1952 up to his death in 1970, was regarded by Egypt's young generation and even the Arab world as a whole, as representing a new type of national leadership in the Third World, while in reality he was simply a leader of the masses and the chief, "rayyes", of the Arab nation. Most of the time we were totally impressed by the positive aspects of his foreign policy, neglecting completely the negative ones. For eighteen years his popularity in Egypt was supreme, and in most Arab countries his charismatic leadership was unparalleled, never challenged by any other leader in the area. This was made obvious when the Arab masses reaffirmed, to a large extent, their loyalty to him, despite his setback in June 1967. Any attempt to judge his policy or his foreign relations with the superpowers or analyse his charisma within an objective context became taboo for most Arab historians, who did not dare to discuss this, probably for fear of any adverse reaction from the public. Although a detailed study of Nasser's foreign policy in general would be beyond the scope and length of this study, we will, nevertheless, focus our attention on Egypt's relations with the US, or in other words, Nasser's relations with John Foster Dulles, placing them under close and objective scrutiny.

Another important reason for undertaking this study is that a large number of the writers who have treated US-Egyptian relations during this period have failed adequately to consult the primary sources, which are

essential for the understanding and assessment of the political thoughts of the policy-makers and the reasoning behind their political decisions. There is no doubt that these sources clarify and lead towards an accurate explanation of many of the political initiatives.

Finally as a case study it attempts to trace the development in the bilateral relations between Egypt and the United States, while answering the following questions:

1. Were there any early contacts between the Free Officers and the American authorities before the revolution?
2. What were the main reasons behind the breakdown of US-Egyptian relations?
3. Were Nasser's ambitions the main reason for America's failure in the area, or was it Dulles' miscalculation and his misunderstanding of the dynamics of Arab political culture?
4. Why were 1953 and early 1956 turning-points in America's attitude towards Egypt, as was 1955 for Egypt's towards America?
5. Did the young Egyptian leader understand the fact that in the harsh, political world one must pay for what one gets?

For the purpose of this study, a chronological order of events will be followed: the development of US-Egyptian relations up to 1952, the road to the revolution, and the early contacts between the Egyptian officers and the US. Subsequently we will outline the US view of and attitude to the Egyptian Revolution, the US and the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, the collapse of peace, American efforts to achieve peace between Egypt and Israel, and its attempt to make Egypt the first Arab country to conclude peace with Israel. Finally, it focuses upon American

efforts to build up its military network in the area depending upon the "Northern-tier" countries rather than Egypt, and culminating with the Suez crisis.

A wide range of sources was used; primary sources were, of course, the first to be consulted. For the American sources, all materials were available either in the American National Archives in Washington, DC, which cover the period from 1942 to 1954, the National Record Center at Maryland, or in the presidential libraries, such as the Truman Library and the Eisenhower Library, where papers and oral history collections revealed invaluable and little-known information, including Eisenhower's thoughts and those of his aides, especially during the Suez crisis in 1956. Other sources were extensively consulted, such as John Foster Dulles' oral history collection and his private papers; also the private papers of the Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, at Princeton University's Sally Mudd Library, and George Allen's papers at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, plus many others. A great deal of information, some of it never published, was gathered by the author through interviews with various American personalities, such as ex-ambassadors to Egypt, CIA agents in the Middle East, and State Department officers. The British sources were essential, shedding light upon the differences in the political attitudes between the two major Western allies, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s. All materials were available either in the Public Record Office (PRO) at Kew, or in the Middle East Centre of St. Antony's College, Oxford. Access to Egyptian archives was impossible as all documents from 1952-1956 came under the Fifty Years' Rule. Fortunately, interviews with prominent personalities who had participated in the events before 1952 and after provided me with a clearer picture of the

political atmosphere in Egypt in our era as well as details on US-Egyptian relations. Also books by Nasser and his speeches, together with those of Naguib, Baghdadi, Anwar el-Sadat and Mohammed Heikal, to some extent shed light on the official Egyptian point of view during this era.

Taken all in all, this range of sources may enable one to form a reasonably balanced judgment on the critical years under review.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNITED STATES-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS UP TO 1952

The Period prior to the Second World War

From the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 to the early twentieth century, the United States had had limited involvement and interests in Egypt. For Britain, Egypt represented its most important outpost in the Arab Middle East, where the strategic control of the Suez Canal maintained its imperial "life-line" and world trade interests. American policy traditionally had espoused the containment of any political involvement within countries under European colonial rule.¹ Being faithful to this policy, the United States considered Egypt as a part of the British sphere of influence, thus confining its activities there to commercial undertakings as well as to educational, religious and philanthropic activities.²

In the period between the two world wars, American commercial interests in Egypt increased, and American missionaries were requested by the State Department to negotiate a treaty which would guarantee their rights in Egypt. Consequently, treaties of arbitration and conciliation were signed in August 1929. An agreement of 24 May 1930 provided American interests with unconditional rights and gave America most-favoured-nation treatment.³ During this period American enterprises such as Kodak, SoCony Vacuum, Singer Sewing Machines, and General Motors, established branch offices in Egypt.⁴ All these developments led the American State

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1. J. De Novo, American Interests and policies in the Middle East 9 (University press of Minnesota 1963) p19
 2. L.C. Wright, United States policy towards Egypt 1830-1914 (Exposition press: New York 1969) pp238-40; see also Bryson Thomas, Seeds of Mid-East Crisis, (McFarland: N. Carolina 1981) p128.
 3. De Novo, op cit p 368, Bryson, op, cit, p128.
 4. Gail Meyer, Egypt and the United States, the Formation years (Associated University press, New Jersey 1980, p.35.

Department to classify Egypt as America's best customer among the Near Eastern countries, especially as American exports to Egypt were in dollar volume ten times those going to Iraq.⁵ Considering the expansion of America's interests in Egypt during the inter-war years, it did not deliberately seek to weaken, or to replace, the special position which Great Britain held there.

In this period four ministers of widely different backgrounds and training were representing the United States' government in Egypt; none of these had any diplomatic training or had been members of the foreign service.⁶ Consequently, no formal American policy towards Egypt had been formulated. In the wake of the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, at the Montreux Conference of 1937, the US came to support the Egyptian bid to repeal of laws of Capitulations.⁷ The State Department expressed the belief that the Capitulations remaining in Egypt were not representative of the spirit of the times, and were not essential in protecting either American nationals or American interests in Egypt.⁸

American-Egyptian Relations during and after the Second World War

After the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, Egypt came to supply British troops with all the necessary facilities as prescribed in the 1936 Treaty concluded between the two countries. Although Egypt did not declare war against the Axis powers, it severed its diplomatic relations with Germany in 1939 and with Italy in 1940.⁹

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5. NA RG 59. 711-83/8-30-45, to Secretary from NEA: "Policy of the US towards Egypt", 30 August 1945.
 6. De Novo, op.cit., p.369.
 7. NA RG 59, op.cit., 30 August 1945.
 8. Philip Baram, The Department of State in the Middle East 1919-1945, (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia 1978), p.183.
 9. NA RG 59, op.cit., 30 August 1945, p.4.

The principal consequence of the foregoing development, in so far as relations between Egypt and the US were concerned, was that at the request of the Egyptian government, the US assumed charge of all Egyptian interests in the Netherlands, Italy, and eventually in Germany. This service was performed while the US remained neutral.¹⁰

Before America's involvement in the war Cairo had become the headquarters of the Middle East Supply Centre (MESC), an organisation established by Britain for the purpose of maintaining the civilian economies of approximately eighteen different Near Eastern countries. Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the American government was invited by the British to join MESC, which became a joint British-American undertaking.¹¹ This marked a new initiative in America's global strategy and, for the first time, the United States agreed to undertake defence commitments concerning the Middle East.

Egypt had become a vital base for the Allies' war effort in the Middle East. Cairo was the centre for Allied intelligence headquarters, and for lease-lend distribution, as well as for propaganda operations. Britain built one of the world's most extensive military bases on the banks of the Suez Canal¹² which eventually became the cornerstone of the Allied defence apparatus in the area.

Events moved so quickly that in the summer of 1942, Egypt was very nearly lost to the Axis powers when Rommel's desert army advanced deep into the country's western territories. The situation had become so critical, threatening not only the British defence system but also America's

10. Ibid., p.4.

11. Ibid., p.5.

12. Brian Horrocks, "Middle East Defence - a British Point of View", Middle Eastern Affairs, February 1955, p.33.

strategic priorities, that the American Minister in Egypt sent a note to the Egyptian government stating that henceforth "the defense of Egypt has been declared vital to the defense of the USA".¹³ Under these circumstances, the United States government decided not to intervene in the confrontation which had erupted between the Egyptian king and the British ambassador on 4 February 1942. Regardless of his friendship with King Farouk, the American Minister in Cairo explained that "at the present moment there was only one great issue in the world and that was the defeat of Hitler".¹⁴ The State Department also clarified America's position with regard to British interests in Egypt by commenting that "Egypt is so clearly within the British sphere of influence".¹⁵

During the war America had supported and defended Britain's status quo in Egypt. Just as the war was coming to an end, however, the special relationship with respect to the Middle East in general and Egypt in particular, was undergoing a change. A weakened British Empire became uneasy over American moves towards a rapprochement with Egypt.¹⁶

The American government had realised that as a result of British military defeats in the war the prestige of Great Britain in Egypt was on the wane, while America's popularity among the local population was being constantly reinforced.¹⁷ Accordingly, the Near Eastern Division of the State Department recommended that "It seems clear that we must continue to assume great responsibility in the area".¹⁸ Exploiting

13. FO.115/3864 Confidential, British Supply Council 1942, from British Supply Council.

14. FR of the US, 1942, Volume IV, pp.66-7, The Minister in Egypt to Secretary of State, Cairo, 4 February 1942.

15. FR *ibid.*, memo. by Under-Secretary to the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs.

16. FO.115/3864, *op.cit.*, File No.PA8, Confidential, British Supply Council to other governments, Eden to Viscount Halifax, London, 26 February 1942.

17. US FR 1942, Vol.IV, pp.76-8, memo. by Chief of the Division of the Near East, 8 May 1942.

18. *Ibid.*, p.78.

American sympathy and the new trend in American policy in the area, the Egyptian Minister in Washington openly expressed his fears of the deterioration of the British military situation in Egypt and the growing anti-British feeling among the population, asking the American government "to use its air force to deter the German invasion of Egypt".¹⁹

The Egyptian request marked a very important shift in the balance held between British and American (military) influence in Egypt, moving in favour of the latter. Although Egypt officially (according to the 1936 Treaty) was considered as Britain's responsibility and within its political sphere of influence, by 1942 the United States had expanded its military installations there. The American armed forces established their Center for the Co-ordination and Control of all military activities related to the Middle East in Cairo. Moreover, a new American base (Payne Field) was established near Cairo, costing the American government approximately \$2.5 million.²⁰

The United States slowly assumed a new and more forceful approach in its relations with Egypt. The American Minister in Egypt during 1943 received sympathetically a request made by the Egyptian government for two aeroplanes, reporting back to his government in the following tone: "The supply of these planes would not only assist in the furtherance of the war effort but would have a beneficial effect on American-Egyptian relations".²¹ Although the US was unable to meet this request due to its specific needs in its war effort,²² the American Secretary of State

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19. Ibid., Memo. of Conversation, participants Assistant Secretary of State, Egyptian Minister, 22 June 1942.
 20. NA RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, December, File 1945, to Secretary from NEA, 30 August 1945.
 21. US FR Vol.VI, pp.66-7, Minister in Egypt to Secretary of State, Cairo, 8 February 1943.
 22. Ibid., from Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Cairo (Kirk), 27 February 1943.

left the door open by saying that a more positive response to such requests could be expected in the future. The British were made uneasy by such American overtures, especially as they entailed direct military links between the United States and Egypt. To foil such moves the British Embassy in Cairo informed the American Legation in Egypt that they would have to impose restrictions on the Egyptian government, and that all requests for military materials and other stores from abroad should be routed through the British authority in Egypt.²³

The American government did not hesitate to challenge the British position which maintained that the Middle East, and especially Egypt, should remain exclusively within the British sphere of influence. The American secretary of State personally supported the new policy by instructing the American ambassador accredited to Britain: "It is the policy of this government to receive direct, enquiries from the Near Eastern countries..." The legation in Cairo, moreover, had been instructed to make this policy known to both the British Embassy and the appropriate Egyptian authorities if at any time this question should arise.²⁴ The Secretary's statement outlined the new American attitude vis-à-vis lingering British ambitions of hegemony in the Middle East, particularly regarding Egypt. The United States began openly to criticise British policy in Egypt, and particularly British interference in Egyptian internal affairs.²⁵

23. US FR 1943, Vol.V, p.2, the Secretary of State to Admiral Williams, Chief of Staff, 25 May 1943.

24. Ibid., the Secretary of State to the American Ambassador in the United Kingdom, 19 June 1943.

25. FO.141/229 USA 1943, from Mr. Campbell, Radio House, Cairo, 15 October 1943.

Meanwhile, America sought to weaken British influence; yet it was not willing to assume the special position which Great Britain had enjoyed in Egypt. American policy-makers realised that they should utilise America's newly-acquired importance in Egypt instead of being a passive partner of Britain. In order to legitimise and reinforce American interests in Egypt, the State Department in 1944 made every endeavour to promote the American Legation in Egypt to the status of an embassy, but the British rejected this initiative.²⁶ In the same context of conflicting priorities, the United States transferred their Minister in Egypt, Mr. Kirk, to Italy; he was a man who, in the British view, was the "soul of Anglo-American solidarity loyalty here".²⁷

The Americans began a massive propaganda campaign, while coming into greater direct contact with Egypt's local population.²⁸ They developed closer commercial ties with Egypt, especially after 1944 when the State Department assigned a special economic mission to Egypt in order to increase Middle Eastern exports to the United States.²⁹ Such commercial undertakings and activities on the part of the United States also involved the establishment of banks³⁰ and the acquisition of oil concessions.³¹ American initiatives were no longer confined to private individuals within a commercial context, but became part of a national policy.³²

26. NA RG 59, 711-83/8-3045 to SeC from NEA, 30 August 1945. See also FO.921-229, USA policy in the Middle East, 28 April 1944.

27. FO.921/119-1943, Middle East official US oil interests in the Middle East, Cairo 19 October 1943.

28. FO.954/5, part 3, 1943, from British Embassy, Cairo, to Eden, 25 June 1943.

29. FO.921/230-1944, US policy in the Middle East, from Shane to Eden, 29 September 1944.

30. FO.921/229-1944, from British Embassy, Cairo, to FO, 12 April 1944.

31. FO.921/119-1943, from British Embassy, Cairo, to FO, 12 December 1943.

32. FO.921/230-1944, *op.cit.*, Air Wings British Mission to British Embassy, 11 October 1944, "United States government sent a military mission to Egypt to sell the American Kittyhawk 'planes to the Royal Egyptian Air Force".

This marked a clear shift from the pattern of previous American policy, which used to depend on the endeavours of individual American nationals, to a new policy counting mainly on the government's initiative or involvement. Thus, at the beginning of 1943 the United States government assumed a direct role in various economic enterprises. This change in the manner of American involvement can in large measure be accounted for by its increased concern over the development of the Middle East and the deterioration of British influence in the area.

Similar American activities led Lord Killearn, the British Ambassador to Egypt, to point out in his telegram to the Foreign Office that "the USA is visibly striving by every means to secure a dominant position..."³³ In another dispatch to the British government, he concluded that "a potential danger to our strategic interests, the American activities... are in no way comparable to the Soviet penetration in the Middle East".³⁴

The British were in a dilemma, being conscious of their precarious position in Egypt and also of American ambitions to exploit this situation, thus undermining further the legitimacy of the "old British Empire". Lord Killearn foresaw this danger, considering that further American economic and political penetration in Egypt would lead to a "crisis".³⁵

The Egyptian government welcomed all American initiatives in Egypt, as they would promote the incentives to "reduce the high cost of living",³⁶

33. FO.921/230-1944, op.cit., from British Embassy in Cairo to Eden, 21 September 1944.

34. Killearn Diaries (FO.921/229-1944, op.cit.), from Cairo to Foreign Office, 12 March 1944.

35. FO.921/1929-1944, US policy in the Middle East, from the British Embassy, Cairo, to Foreign office, 18 February 1944.

36. FO.921/230-1944, op.cit., telegram from Lord Killearn to Eden, 3 July 1944.

especially in the post-war period, while becoming bargaining points in any future conflict with the British government. During his conversation with King Farouk of Egypt, President Roosevelt, in promoting the new American initiatives, stressed the hope for greater exchanges in all fields between their two countries³⁷ while he also advised the king to initiate social reforms in order to counter Soviet propaganda.³⁸ Truman, who succeeded Roosevelt, was also very keen on maintaining close links with Egypt, inviting King Farouk to visit the USA by the end of 1945. He did this without informing the British authorities since the Americans knew that "if the British had known of the invitation they would have tried to delay or prevent it".³⁹

It was obvious that the Americans had initiated a new chapter in their policy towards Egypt. Mr. Loy Henderson, Director of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), summarised the new initiative to the Secretary of State by stating that "we have never sought to undermine the special position which Great Britain enjoys by treaty in that country [Egypt], but our friendly influence has been on the side of Egypt's progress towards full political and economic independence".⁴⁰

To some extent the escalation of the Cold War between East and West had its impact also upon American policy towards Egypt. It was evident that since 1944⁴¹ the Soviet Union had increased its activities in Egypt by trying to influence Egypt's policies in formulating extreme demands

37. New York Times, 21 February 1945, p.8, "White House announcement of New Talk".

38. US FR Vol.VI, 1945, "Roosevelt talks with King Farouk".

39. Truman Library. Papers of Harry S. Truman, White House Central File, 17 September 1945.

40. NA RG 59-711-83/8-3045 to Mr. Secretary, from NEA, 30 August 1945.

41. FO.141/1067 Labour Situation, from Labour Counsellor Report 2/1945, Top Secret. "The development of Communism in Egypt (4)". See also WNRC RG 84, American Embassy, Cairo, files, from the American Legation, Cairo to Secretary of State, 7 January 1946, No.1260.

for a Treaty revision.⁴² By this time it was becoming apparent that the precariousness of the British position in Egypt was being accentuated by the growth of "Egyptian nationalism" which was determined chiefly to terminate the British occupation of Egyptian territory, whilst also trying to achieve a union with the Sudan. The need for a policy of Anglo-American co-operation was sorely felt by the British in regard to the Egyptian demands. In January 1946 the British government had come to believe that it was necessary to inform the American government of all the details concerning their negotiations with Egypt.⁴³ By taking such action, the British began to accept the new American role in the area as a fait accompli; voices, such as Lord Killearn's, raised in order to oppose the new role of America in Egypt were stilled. The Americans began to exploit this trend by extending their economic and political relations with Egypt. By the first half of 1946 the United States government signed a bilateral air agreement with Egypt, whereby the American-owned Trans-World Airline was authorised to operate out of Cairo.⁴⁴ Moreover, the American government also acquired military air rights in Egypt which would grant permission for the use of "Payne Field by US military aircraft for a period of six months, to be renewed if necessary by mutual agreement".⁴⁵ Furthermore, in 1946 for the first time the American government offered a vacancy at the American Staff College to an Egyptian army officer.⁴⁶

42. FO.141/897, "Egypt and USSR" 1943 - 633/1/1943, 8 February 1943, from Cairo to Foreign Office.

43. FO.141/1081/Defence Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Foreign Office to Cairo, 26 January 1946.

44. Lord Killearn Diaries 1945-1947, 11 April 1946, Cairo, p.108, Oxford, private papers.

45. NA RG 84/542-3, Memo. to Mr. Mattison from Mr. Adams, background on US.

46. FO.371/1089, Defence - Egyptian Army, 5 September 1946, from Cairo to Foreign Office.

As a matter of fact, the convergence of the Cold War and Egyptian nationalism hastened closer Anglo-American co-operation and silenced those, like Lord Killearn and Eden, calling for the non-promotion to embassy status of the United States Legation accredited to Egypt.⁴⁷ On 19 September 1946 the United States and the Egyptian governments exchanged ambassadors for the first time.⁴⁸

From the foregoing it seems clear that when the British appeared strong in Egypt the Americans adjusted themselves to a secondary role typified by moderate co-operation on political and military levels, and by moderate competition on the economic and public relations levels. When the British appeared to be weakening or becoming conciliatory, especially following the Second World War, the American government saw golden opportunities to exploit and compete moderately, and sometimes almost intensively, and at every level.⁴⁹

American-Egyptian Relations from 1947 onwards

At the beginning of the first stage after the establishment of the embassies, events moved rapidly as on 27 January 1947 when the Egyptian government announced the breakdown of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations on the question of sovereignty over the Sudan.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it declared its intention to present the whole case to the

47. From 1943 to 1945 the British (coalition) government always rejected American attempts to raise its legation to embassy status. See Killearn Diaries (*op.cit.*) 5 April 1945, p.106. See also FO.954, Part 5 from Cairo to Foreign Office, 5 April 1945, 803-1945, Eden comment "protest against proposal to raise US and Egyptian legations to embassies". See also US Foreign relations, Vol.V. 1944. Exchange with the UK regarding status of diplomatic mission of USA in Egypt and Iraq, 25 May 1944.

48. Truman Library, Official Files, No.283, Egypt Memo.for the President, 16 August 1946.

49. Philip Baram, *op.cit.*, p.199.

50. FO.115/4320 British Embassy, Washington, Tel.No.77608, 26 January 1947, from Bevin to Lord Inverchapel.

Security Council.⁵¹ Nokrashy Pasha, the then Egyptian prime minister, demanded total evacuation of all British forces and proclaimed absolute Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan.⁵²

It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss the details of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, except in so far as it affected American-Egyptian relations from 1947 onwards.

The factors governing Anglo-Egyptian relations had changed rapidly during the eleven years which had elapsed between the 1936 Treaty and Nokrashy's declaration of the breakdown of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. It was well known to the planners of American policy that the British position in Egypt was being "completely wiped out and would disappear entirely...so the Americans have to stand on their feet in dealing with the Egyptian government and this is just a little way in which [they] can start the ball rolling".⁵³ Loy Henderson, the NEA Director, confirmed the above in 1947 when, in his Top Secret Memorandum, he considered that "the continued presence of British troops in Egypt represents a liability not only to Great Britain but to the United States and the Western world in general. Their presence is poisoning the atmosphere of the whole Near and Middle East rapidly and to such an extent that unless some indication is given in the near future that British troops are to be withdrawn from Egypt unconditionally, at a set date, that date to be the earliest practicable, the relations of the Arab world with the Western world may be seriously impaired for many years to come".⁵⁴

51. WNRC RG 84/710 Box 165, to Secretary of State charged to the American Embassy, Cairo, 28 January 1947. The American ambassador reported that at the appearance of King Farouk at the debate the MPs cheered him as "King of Egypt and Sudan".

52. For more about the Anglo-Egyptian situation, see FO.141/1081 Defence Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, from Sir Walter Smart to Foreign Office, memo. 7 January 1946.

53. RG 319 Army Intelligence project MD 335.11 Egypt. Conversation between Col. Gowling and Mr. Manima, State Department, 13 May 1947.

54. US FR Vol.V, pp.800-02, memo. by Loy Henderson, 28 August 1947, Top secret.

However, the outbreak of the Cold War hastened the consolidation of Anglo-American co-operation and silenced Henderson's call for unconditional evacuation of the British troops from Egypt. As usual, it is a combination of causes rather than a single cause that can explain the American stance vis-à-vis the dispute between two of its friends. With the escalation of the Cold War and the declaration of the Truman Doctrine on 12 March 1947, the United States confirmed its leadership among the Western powers against Soviet penetration in the Middle East, and indeed throughout the world.⁵⁵

Support for the British military presence at the Suez Canal base was not viewed in Washington as being inconsistent with the United States' strategy in the area. In 1947 Egypt represented for the American strategists "a potential base for operations to counteract threats from the north against the Suez Canal area of the oil-rich lands of the Middle East...Egypt also had the necessary housing, air and transportation facilities which would be a valuable asset for any modern military force entering the area".⁵⁶ By 1947, and before the Palestine war, it had become apparent that Egypt was incapable of defending the Suez Canal area, as its armed forces were poorly trained, inadequately equipped, and inefficiently led, therefore "[t]hey could not defend the Suez Canal area against a major adversary without immediate foreign aid".⁵⁷ By this time American officials were clearly convinced that this view was correct, as the US Ambassador in Moscow, Walter Bedell Smith, warned that Soviet aims would "[u]rge to gain independent access to the Mediterranean and Arab world and by determination to sever the British

55. Barry Rubin, The Great Powers in the Middle East, p.228.

56. Harry S. Truman Library, papers of Harry S. Truman, President Sec Files, CIA, "The current situation in Egypt", 16 October 1947.

57. Ibid., "Military situation".

jugular at Suez".⁵⁸ American policy was motivated not only by considerations of supporting the British position in the Middle East, but also by its fears that Britain's weakening position there might tempt Britain to make a separate deal with the Soviet Union,⁵⁹ and such a deal from America's point of view could greatly strengthen the Soviet Union's position in the Middle East, "[w]hile it would weaken the British influence and would tend to isolate the United States".⁶⁰

Another factor that was to influence American policy was the fear that Egypt's victory at the United Nations would consolidate the position of Nokrashy's minority government and the status of King Farouk. The British Foreign Office and the American Embassy in Cairo believed that such a development would remove all hope for any social reform in Egypt, and would be an open invitation for Soviet propaganda.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Americans were faced with the dilemma of trying to accomplish a variety of goals, some of which were contradictory. On the one hand they wanted to support the British military presence in Egypt, yet on the other they tried very hard not to alienate Egypt openly. This could be attributed to America's desire to neutralise Egypt in some way during the Palestine crisis.⁶² The Americans were hoping that "Egypt will take the lead in exercising restraint in Palestine"⁶³ depending upon its leading role in the Arab League.

58. Quoted in Barry Rubin, *The Great Powers*, *op.cit.*, pp.224-5.

59. Henderson reported to Acheson that "If the US finds itself unable to render assistance...the British government may well find it will be compelled to approach the Soviet government in an effort to work some arrangement which would have the effect of at least slowing up the Russian advance in the Middle East and elsewhere". See NA RG 59, Henderson to Acheson, Annex a, 868.00/2-2547.

60. *Ibid.*, also Rubin, *op.cit.*, p.226.

61. FO.371/62967, Minute by Riches, 14 March 1947: "If Nokrashy and the King triumph it will mean that a place regime of wholly anti-democratic character will be riveted on Egypt indefinitely. It will do nothing for the fellahin or the industrial workers while it exists". RG 84-710-Box 165, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 25 February 1947. (Nokrashy, like Sidki led a minority party at odds with the Wafd.)

62. Harry S. Truman Library, "The current situation in the Near East", 17 October 1947, ORE 52.

63. I Harry S. Truman Library, Naval aid. 21 - State Dept. Briefs. See December 1947, Summary of Telegrams.

As for Egypt, American support was badly needed because in Nokrashy's view "without such support Egypt could not win".⁶⁴ Consequently, in February 1947 Nokrashy appointed Mr. Theodore A. Morde (an American citizen) as a "press consultant" to the Egyptian government, giving him a mandate to do everything possible "...to win American sympathy for the Egyptian side".⁶⁵ Simultaneously, and as a direct consequence, Egyptian propaganda was intensified in America.⁶⁶ Officially, Egyptian diplomacy began to move in two political directions; Nokrashy intimated to the Americans the possibility of more Egyptian reliance upon the Soviet Union, in case the United States supported British demands.⁶⁷ But at the same time he was keen to show that the idea of American-Egyptian military co-operation was not discarded. In private discussions with the American ambassador in Egypt, the Egyptian prime minister told him that "He hoped to secure the services of American military advisers in Egypt as soon as the British Military Mission will have been liquidated in 1948".⁶⁸ By this gesture, the Egyptian prime minister tried to convince the Americans that, if Egypt had been in a position to sell her favours, she would unquestionably opt for the United States.

Despite Egyptian attempts to gain American support for its cause at

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- 64. RG 84 File No.2-1947, Department of State memo. of Conv. 1 August 1947, Subject: Visit of Nokrashy Pasha participants, Secretary of State, etc.
 - 65. NA RG 84 883, 01 A/3-547, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Loy Henderson, 5 March 1947, top secret.
 - 66. FO.371/63035, Egypt and Sudan, Egyptian propaganda in the USA, from UK Delegation, New York, 30 May 1947: also interview with Moustafa Amin, Cairo, 14 January 1985.
 - 67. RG 84, Cairo Embassy, top secret file 710, American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, June 23 1947.
 - 68. RG 59 CR of the State Department, Box 6902, Department of State, incoming telegram from Cairo to Secretary, No.545, 5 May 1947.

the UN Security Council,⁶⁹ the United States was unwilling to take such a step on the grounds that they preferred to leave Egypt to British initiatives while paying greater attention to the "outer ring" of the Middle East.⁷⁰ In order, therefore, to avoid any rift in the relations with Egypt, the American administration did its best to exhaust every possible means of persuading Egypt to resume its negotiations with Britain.⁷¹ From the very beginning the Americans insisted on foiling any Egyptian appeal to the United Nations over the Anglo-Egyptian dispute that would give the Soviet Union a chance to "fish in troubled waters". Despite the American efforts, the American ambassador in Egypt in reporting on Nokrashy Pasha wrote "[h]is motivating ambition is to go down in history as [the] man who got [the] British out of Egypt".⁷² It was Nokrashy's firm belief that the British would not depart from Egypt unless they were pressured by world opinion or a consensus of the member states of the Security Council.

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69. In March 1947 Nokrashy pointed out to Mr. Morde, his American "press consultant", that he had great faith in the Security Council, obviously basing his belief on the fact "that America's influence will ensure that justice is guaranteed to all nations". See RG.59, Record of the Department of State 833 01/A13-547, American Embassy, Cairo, to Henderson, Top Secret, 5 March 1947.
70. FO.371/62970, Egypt and Sudan, from Moscow to Foreign Office, Top Secret, 25 April 1947. Marshall pointed out to the British that "US intervention in Greece and Turkey would make it quite impossible for them to intervene in Egypt".
71. Akhbar Alyoum, 22 March 1947, "Will America help Egypt?" It said that the US will communicate with members of the Arab League and ask them to make a last effort to induce Egypt and Britain to reach an amicable settlement. From time to time the American policy-makers declared that they considered the Anglo-Egyptian dispute "...a matter entirely between the British and the Egyptians". SEE FO.371/62973. Egypt and Sudan File No.12, 1947, from Washington to FO, 28 May 1947. See also FO.371/62973, from Moscow to FO, 29 May 1947. Soviet newspapers reported that "King Farouk received a special message from Truman, appealing to him to reopen talks with the British". Moustafa Amin confirmed the foregoing; interview with Amin, Cairo, Egypt.
72. US Foreign Relations, Vol.V, pp.772-4, Tuck to Marshall, Secret, 7 May 1947.

This apparent failure in the American political tactic aiming to induce Egypt not to appeal to the UN did not stop American attempts to try to persuade Egypt to bring its case before the General Assembly, rather than the Security Council.⁷³ As mentioned earlier, it was a combination of causes rather than a single cause which explains the reasons behind this American initiative. First, if the Egyptian government brought the controversy with the UK before the Security Council, the Soviet Union might propose an "immediate withdrawal of the British troops",⁷⁴ thus giving itself the "chance to obtain a foothold in the Arab world". Second, according to the American Secretary of State, "a US vote unfavorable to Egypt in the General Assembly was believed to have less unfavorable effects in Arab world than the same vote in the Security Council".⁷⁵ Third, the Americans were afraid that the Soviet Union would have to participate in any investigation committee on the Sudan set up by the Security Council, which "would be a matter of great concern to the US government".⁷⁶ Finally, American interests in Egypt could have been jeopardised as the American ambassador in Cairo clarified when he said that "If the Egyptian case be decided by the Council in some

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73. FO.115/4320, British Embassy, Washington, from Lord Inverchapel to FO, 26 April 1947, Tel.No.2515. Also see US FR 1947, Vol.V, pp.790-1. On 8 August 1947 the American Secretary of State instructed the US Representative at the UN "to find some means of removing dispute from the Council as soon as possible.
74. *Ibid.*, pp.770-1, from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in Egypt, Washington, 3 May 1947.
75. US Fr Vol.V 1947, p.774, The Secretary of State to Embassy in Egypt, 16 May 1947. From January 1947 the Arab League press section issued a statement in which it announced "The support of the League for Egypt's cause", see RG 84 Box 165-710, Arab League from American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 8 January 1947.
76. FO.371/62978 Egypt and Sudan, from Cairo to FO 4 August 1947. See also US FR Vol.V, pp.772-4, from Tuck to Sec. 7 May 1947. In May 1947 Tass confirmed the Soviet's support of Egypt's struggle, and in August 1947 *Pravda* accused the British propaganda of "stating falsely that the Soviet Union would not support Egypt's case".

manner displeasing to Egypt, the US rather than the Security Council would receive the blame and American interests in Egypt would be prejudiced".⁷⁷

The Americans faced a difficult situation, since their diplomacy had been the subject of criticism by Egyptian public opinion to the effect that American policy was just following the British lead, putting pressure on the Security Council members to induce them to support the British stand.⁷⁸ In these circumstances the immediate and unresolved question was, what kind of political tactics Washington should adopt in order to avoid further complications in its relations with Egypt?

Behind the scenes, American diplomacy began to move in two directions. It tried hard to exploit Egypt's good relations with Saudi Arabia by urging the latter to mediate to "determine means of ending the Anglo-Egyptian dispute".⁷⁹ Similarly, in order to counter the possibility that the Soviet Union or Poland might submit a resolution to the Security Council calling on the United Kingdom "to evacuate its base from Egypt",⁸⁰ on 20 August 1947 the Americans enticed the Brazilian representative on the Security Council to propose a resolution calling on "the governments of the UK and Egypt to resume direct negotiations and that should they fail they should resort to any other peaceful means of their own volition to settle their dispute". Additionally, it recommended that the Security

77. WNRC RG 84 Box 165-710, File No.3, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 8 August 1947.

78. See al-Kutla, 26 July 1947 (US policy in the Middle East).

79. WNRC-RG Box 104, File 800, from Jedda to American Embassy, London, 16 August 1947. See FO.371/62983, Egypt and the Sudan 1947. From Jedda to FO, 15 August 1947, Ibn Saud warned the Americans that "the dispute...would lead to great Soviet penetration in the Middle East".

80. RG 84 Box 165, File 710/3, Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, from Department of State to Cairo, 15 August 1947.

Council be informed of any progress achieved in this regard.⁸¹ The British saw the Brazilian resolution as the best way to break the impasse in their relations with Egypt.

American support of the Brazilian resolution and its own commitment to sustain British military hegemony in Egypt was not viewed in Washington as being inconsistent with the American desire to enhance its relations with Egypt. In September 1947, President Truman invited King Farouk to visit the United States.⁸² To improve Egypt's financial situation, the American government did all it could "to assist Egypt in exporting more cotton to the USA".⁸³ Moreover, they agreed to support Egypt with \$5.6 million to finance her imports from the US.⁸⁴ The foregoing factors encouraged Egypt to request United States military aid, thus assuring greater self-reliance on its defence capabilities. Nevertheless, the State Department and the Defence Department believed that supplying arms to Egypt still remained the exclusive right of Britain as Egypt was considered within the British sphere of influence.

The refusal of Egypt's military request occurred only a few weeks before a United Nations' resolution regarding the Partition of Palestine. Americans thought that "it would be unwise to encourage or permit the arming of the Arab countries with American supplies at least for the time being".⁸⁵ By the end of 1947 it was obvious that the nascent Jewish

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- 81. FO.371/62981, Egypt and Sudan 1947, from UK Representative UN, to FO, 19 August 1947.
 - 82. Papers of Harry S. Truman, WHG (White House, General) file, State Department correspondence 46-47, Folder 9, Department of State memo. for Connelly, 17 September 1947.
 - 83. RG 59 General record of the State Department, File 1945-1949, Box 6902 883-0011-447, 4 November 1947, from the State Department to Tuck, Egypt, p.4.
 - 84. State Department Bulletin, August 1947, see RG 84-800 Egypt, to Mr. Patterson from J. Pock, US Treasury Representative, 6 August 1947.
 - 85. RG 59 General records of the State Department, File 1945-1949, Box 6902-883-0011-447, 4 November 1947, from William Jenkins to Tuck, p.2.

state would impose itself upon the Middle Eastern political scene, and have its impact on American policy towards Egypt.

The Palestine War

When the war in Palestine erupted in full force after the British withdrawal in May 1948, Egypt was neither militarily nor psychologically prepared to confront the new Jewish state. American support of Israel and Egypt's defeat did not cloud the "friendly relationship which had so long existed between Egypt and the USA".⁸⁶ The principal reaction among educated people was that Egypt should henceforth confine her efforts to the pursuit of her more immediate national interests. Although on the one hand Egyptian public feeling was being stirred up against America by the opposition press and the Muslim Brotherhood,⁸⁷ the Egyptian government on the other hand was doing its best to avoid any public hostility against the United States. This cannot be better illustrated than by the letter of Mohamed Salah el-Din, the Egyptian Foreign Minister during 1950-52, to the American ambassador to Egypt, viz., "[As regards] the American government policy regarding the Palestine question and its profound effect on the Egyptian people...the Egyptian government has so acted to restrict this effect within the narrowest possible limits".⁸⁸ This official position can be attributed to the obvious fact that the ruling class in Egypt, if it had to make a choice between Great Britain and the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, would

86. Harry S. Truman Library, papers of Clark M. Clifford, Folder 2, telegrams and cables, from Cairo to Secretary, 6 January 1949.

87. RG84 Box 211-120 350/55 Egypt, position of Great Powers in Egypt, Cairo 481 - memo. on position of Great Powers, 7 March 1950.

88. FO.371/90182-1951, Minister des Affaires Etrangères, Alexandria, 8 October 1951.

understandably choose the former because of their social and economic structure. They could have been irreparably harmed by adopting a Soviet orientation. The American policy-planners got the impression that "It would be suicidal for this class to come within the Soviet sphere of influence".⁸⁹ The Palestine war had convinced American planners that it was difficult for the Egyptian ruling class to turn away from the traditional pro-Western line to a pro-Eastern one. Furthermore, Egypt's defeat in the war emphasised two important facts: First, that the danger of regional war had become more imminent, especially after the establishment of Israel, and secondly, that Egypt was incapable of defending the Suez Canal against a major adversary without some external aid.

Meanwhile, the fundamental issue in American-Egyptian relations was still the preservation of the British military presence in Suez. In 1949 the British and the Egyptians resumed their talks which had been discontinued since 1947.⁹⁰ American officials remained reluctant to commit themselves to the idea of collective talks,⁹¹ not wanting to interfere in a dispute between two of its friends. By taking such a stand America tried to avoid the danger of antagonising either party. The American leadership was well aware that with the escalation of the

89. Harry S. Truman Library, Clifford papers, memo. from Clifford to Truman, Palestine folder, November 1947.

90. FO.371/96931 1952, from British Embassy, Washington, to FO, 28 May 1952.

91. FR of US 1949, Vol.VI, pp.69-70. RG 319 PX0 091 Egypt 7.5 Anglo-American staff talk at Fayid, 13 April 1949. (See FO 371/73555 1949 File No.1199, from FO to Cairo, No.371/21-2-1949 (top secret)).

global Cold War⁹² and the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949, any American participation in Anglo-Egyptian talks on collective security measures could lead to increasing regional tension between the two blocs.⁹³

Another external factor that was to influence America's non-involvement was the fear of the effects that their policy might have on the new State of Israel. Many believed that American participation would lead Israel to turn away from its neutral policy between East and West.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, America's unwillingness to participate in the Anglo-Egyptian talks did not alter its previous position concerning the presence of British troops in Egypt. In January 1950, George McGhee, the American Under-Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, expressed to his British counterpart the view that, "It did not seem wise to consider evacuating British troops from Egypt under present circumstances, Russian aggression in the Near East was entirely possible and it would be essential to our common strategic plan to have the British on the spot".⁹⁵

The Wafd in Power

At the same time, when the Wafd assumed power again in January 1950, it was clear that it would before very long have to justify itself both to its supporters and to its opponents by an attempt to solve the

92. In 1948, the Cold War between East and West was brought to new heights of tension with the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the defection of Tito, and the Berlin blockade.

93. See FR 1948 NSC 20/4, 23 November 1948.

94. See Safran, The United States and Israel, p.218. HT Library, NSC Meetings No.54, 4 June 1950, A Report to the NSC 17 May 1950. See also FO.371/73555 1949, 7 March 1949 from the British Co-ordination Committee for Chief of Staff. "Admiral Connolly is personally agreeable to defence discussion between the British and the Egyptians, this would appear to accord with the State Department insistence that there should be no apparent defence line-up as between ourselves, US and Egypt for fear of its misinterpretation by Israel".

95. US FR Vol.III 1950, pp.293-5.

Anglo-Egyptian deadlock. The Americans had placed too much trust in the Wafd's sweeping majority to settle the dispute, while the Wafd had overestimated its ability to woo the United States in order to achieve Egypt's national aspirations. A few days after coming to power Mohamed Salah el-Din, the Wafd foreign minister, on 21 January 1950 tried to win over American support by assuring the American ambassador that "Egypt has no intention of attacking Israel".⁹⁶ Salah el-Din's statement showed a great shift in the Wafd's policy towards Israel. The Wafd had ignored the mainstream of Egyptian public opinion in its hostility towards Israel⁹⁷ preferring a new policy of accommodation yet without taking any further steps towards full recognition of it. By doing so the Wafd tried to kill two birds with one stone. It tried to put an end to Britain's excuses that its presence at the Canal base was mainly due to the hostilities between Egypt and Israel.⁹⁸ The Wafd also tried to show that its policy was not in conflict with that of the USA, especially when the latter issued the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950 aiming at achieving peace and stability in the region. Such a step would be conducive, moreover, to acting as a bulwark against possible Soviet penetration in the region.⁹⁹

In June 1950, the negotiations between Egypt and Britain resumed. Egypt put forward the proposal that all British forces should be moved

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96. NA RG 59 Box 4013 77 00/1-2250, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 22 January 1950. Also Salah el-Din repeated the same statement on 9 February 1950. See NA RG 84 Box 214 Egypt 310 from Cairo to Secretary of State, secret, 10-10-1950.
97. A. el-Hadidy, "Mustafa al-Nahhas: A Case Study of Egyptian Political Leadership", unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS 1985, Chapter 5.
98. *Ibid.*, Chapter 5, fn.18. See also office of Military Attache, Embassy of India, Report No.14, 15 May 1950, p.3, Oxford Papers.
99. For the Tripartite Declaration see Safran, *op.cit.*, p.219. In order to understand the main factors which influenced the US to co-ordinate the arms sales with Britain and France and led the US to issue the Declaration, see FR of US Vol.V, 1950, p.158. Also see *ibid.*, pp.135-8; FO.371/81955, American Embassy, Cairo, 28 January 1950, p.5.

to the Gaza Strip.¹⁰⁰ Britain responded by saying it could not move its forces to Gaza on the grounds that the Egyptian-Israeli truce was not adequate, and a final peace settlement with Israel must be reached before British troops could be moved to Gaza.¹⁰¹ Despite the British refusal and Egypt's reservation at concluding a peace treaty with Israel, the United States government was optimistic, accepting that this "idea might result in a peace settlement between Egypt and Israel, simultaneously with agreement between Egypt and the UK".¹⁰² But it seems that this was a mere illusion on the part of the American policy-makers or, in other words, just wishful thinking.

The Korean War

Global events soon followed which had an enormous impact on the balance of power. The war in Korea intensified in June 1950. President Truman in a special message to Congress on 19 July, declared:

The attack upon the Republic of Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that the international Communist movement is prepared to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations. We must therefore recognize the possibility that armed aggression may take place on other nations".¹⁰³

The Americans saw the danger and they began to apply the lessons of Korea to the Middle East. The expansionist aims of the Soviet Union and communist China strengthened Anglo-American co-operation further in the

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100. PREM II 1952 Foreign office 1518-1952. RG 59 674/86A/7-2250 A/JT, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 25 July 1950.
 101. RG 330-092-3 NA to General Box 242, Office of the Secretary of Defence, memo. for General Records 26 September 1950, p.4.
 102. RG 59 Box 2797-674-86A/7-2750, Department of State, Acheson outgoing telegram to American Embassy, London, top secret, 28 July 1950.
 103. US FR 1950, Vol.I, p.346.

Middle East, and the Americans became convinced that the British military presence at the Suez base was vital to Western global strategy.¹⁰⁴

To some extent the Korean War worked to Britain's advantage as there were attempts by Western powers to reinforce Britain's traditional status in the Middle East.¹⁰⁵ Egypt's reaction and its abstention from voting on the Western resolution condemning the act of aggression by North Korea¹⁰⁶ came to underline a very important fact in Egyptian internal politics. The Wafd, frustrated by its failure to obtain any concessions from the West, was led to assume a neutral position. Moreover, this stance emphasised Egypt's resentment at the treatment she had received from the West with respect to her national aims.¹⁰⁷ Needless to say, the Wafd's decision to take a firm stand against the Western powers within the international arena gave the military regime five years later (1955 onwards) the formula to adopt towards what they regarded as Western "pressures".

Egypt's position did not sour American-Egyptian relations. On 1 August 1950, a little more than three weeks after Egypt's abstention, Assistant Secretary George McGhee affirmed that "the relations between Egypt and America are excellent".¹⁰⁸ Apparently American-Egyptian relations during this period improved to the point of cordiality. Washington considered that its support for the British position at the Suez base would not be detrimental to its relations with Egypt. At

104. FO.371/80382, 1950, confidential, 9 May 1950, British Embassy, Washington, to FO. USFR Vol.V, 1950, pp.288-9.

105. Louis Roger, The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951, pp.588-9.

106. Department of State Bulletin, 10 July 1950, pp.78-9, "The US in the UN".

107. For a more detailed analysis of the factors and reasons which led Egypt to take its stand, see NA RG 84 Box 222 R321 Korea 1950, from Cairo to Secretary, 30 June 1950. See also Fo.371/80396 JE 1073/9, Parliamentary Question, Monday, 10 July 1950.

108. RG 59 611.47/8-350, from Cairo to Department of State, 3 August 1950.

joint Anglo-United States political discussions in mid-September 1950, the US Assistant Secretary, George McGhee, once again pointed out that "We had supported the British position as far as we were able to do so. We had turned down all Egyptian efforts to get us to intervene and had emphasised that this is not the time to jeopardise the security of the area".¹⁰⁹ American policy-makers began to be convinced, especially after the Korean experience, that one country should be responsible for a particular area or territory as the Americans had done in Korea. In other words, the Far East would be primarily an American responsibility and the Middle East would, to some extent, be essentially a British one.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Egyptians had hardened their attitude towards Britain, resulting in Britain's decision on 11 September 1950 to suspend all exports of British weapons to Egypt. The Egyptian foreign minister called the arms embargo part of a Western "conspiracy" to keep Egypt weak, so that Britain would not have to withdraw when the 1936 Treaty expired in 1956.¹¹¹ Furthermore, Mohamed Salah el-Din, the Egyptian foreign minister, tried time and time again to exploit American fears of Soviet penetration by indicating that the Egyptians were ready to obtain arms from the Soviet bloc while also concluding a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, which would make "the presence of British troops unnecessary".¹¹²

Washington did not take these Egyptian threats seriously because of the social composition of the Wafd. The Wafd Party was still hoping to

109. FO.371/80383, 1950, top secret, memo. of informal UK-US discussions in connection with the visit to London of G. McGhee, 19 September 1950, p.2.

110. Louis Roger, *op.cit.*, p.714.

111. US FR Vol.V, 1950, p.313, 19 October 1950.

112. *Ibid.*, pp.909-10, the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia to Secretary of State.

find a face-saving formula to satisfy Egyptian national aspirations and to fulfil its commitments to its supporters.¹¹³ According to the American ambassador in London, the Wafd was looking for a solution to "enable the government to state publicly that old bilateral links with the past were broken".¹¹⁴ Therefore, on 9 October 1950 the Egyptian ambassador to Washington raised the possibility of Egyptian association with NATO.¹¹⁵ The State Department opposed the idea because, "It would overburden the NATO structure and lead to demands for similar treatment from other states".¹¹⁶ They considered that if Egypt desired to co-operate in the defence of the Near East area there were a number of ways open to it to do so, "In particular it could adopt a more conciliatory attitude in its discussions with the UK and it could co-operate more fully in the efforts of the UN to develop an effective security system..."¹¹⁷ The Americans may have rejected the proposal of Egyptian participation in NATO not just because of the foregoing reasons, but also because of some secondary factors. They would have liked to ease global tension, especially with the Soviet Union after the Korean war while also avoiding any bitter feeling by Israel, as any Egyptian participation in NATO could affect the military balance between regional states in favour of Egypt.

Frustrated by this lack of progress, Nahas Pasha, the Egyptian prime minister, in a speech delivered at the opening of the Egyptian parliament on 16 November 1950, declared that his government regarded the 1936 Treaty

113. Musa Sabri, Qissat Malik wa Arba Wizarat (Dar al-Qalam: Cairo 1964), p.13.

114. US FR Vol.V, 1950, p.319, The Ambassador in the UK (Douglas) to the Secretary of State, London, 9 November 1950.

115. NA RG 84 Box 218 320, 1950, memo. of conversation with Mr. Berry, NEA, with Egyptian ambassador, 9 October 1950.

116. US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.330-2.

117. RG 59 Box 2845, Egypt 611-74/10-1250 A/JT, 12 October 1950, to Secretary from NEA, Mr. Berry, subject, Egyptian foreign minister's conversation with you.

as an unsatisfactory basis for Egyptian-British co-operation and threatened to repudiate it.¹¹⁸ On the eve of Nahas' speech, Ambassador Caffery tried to persuade the Egyptian acting foreign minister "not to denounce the 1936 Treaty".¹¹⁹ Although Caffery's advice did not go unheeded and Nahas did not actually suggest abrogation in a formal sense, yet by committing himself publicly to "total immediate evacuation", Nahas was emphasising the crux of the problem as it was a race against time.¹²⁰ Ambassador Caffery saw the danger, judging that a compromise with the Egyptians should be undertaken in the Sudan if the situation in Suez was to be salvaged. In his opinion the situation had so deteriorated that the most important thing to be done was "keeping the Egyptians talking in order to ride out the storm". There was still a possibility, according to him, of finding something that the Wafd could sell to its "clamorous clients".¹²¹ Meanwhile, on 2 December 1950, the State Department had instructed the American ambassador to Jedda to urge King Ibn Saud to mediate between Egypt and the UK during his talks with King Farouk of Egypt.¹²² On 21 December 1950, the Egyptian government secretly agreed to renew with the United States the "Agreement for Blanket Landing Rights for [MATS] Aircraft of the Military Air Transport Service" which had been suspended because of the Palestine question in June 1948.¹²³ This policy of improving relations with the United States led the Egyptian acting

118. *Al-Misri*, 17 November 1950, p.6.

119. NA RG 84 Folder 320-1A Box 220, to Secretary of State, Washington, charged to American Embassy, Cairo, November 1950, 51195.

120. For more information about Nahas' position, see A. el-Hadidy, *op.cit.*, Chapter 5, p.222.

121. See US FR Vol.v, 1950, Caffery to Acheson, 25 November 1950, and 11 December 1950. See also Louis, *op.cit.*, p.717.

122. NA RG 84 Box 218 320 Egypt 1950, from Secretary of State to Jedda, Cairo 505, 2 December 1950.

123. NA RG 59 Box 4026 774-56/12-2150, from Cairo to Department, top secret, 21 December 1950. See also RG 330-092-2, Egypt Foreign Service of the US, 21 December 1950.

foreign minister to inform the American ambassador that Egypt was going "to support the General Assembly Resolution of January 3, 1951, declaring the Peking regime to be the aggressor" in the Korean war.¹²⁴

Neither Egyptian attempts nor the deteriorating situation altered American policy concerning the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, which was based on the premise that "any lasting agreement must be arrived at freely through the direct negotiations of the parties".¹²⁵ By adopting such a policy the Americans wanted to highlight an important fact: that they considered the British should maintain their position in Egypt on the basis of the 1936 Treaty,¹²⁶ and that America should support those British demands which inflicted minimum damage to Western interests in the area. It was obvious that there were slight differences between the American strategic interests in the Middle East and those of Britain. For the former the containment of any Soviet penetration, especially in the "outer-ring area" (which had become known as the northern tier¹²⁷ and later known as the Baghdad Pact, especially after the Iraqi participation in February 1955) was the main priority, thus securing America's foothold in Saudi Arabia with its vast oil reserves.¹²⁸ The British were mainly preoccupied with strengthening their own position in the "inner ring" of the area - most notably Egypt.

124. NA RG 59 693-95/55 T. from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.684, 5 January 1951.

125. NA RG 84, Box 2181-320, memo. of conversation, 9 October 1950, memo. of conversation, participants: Egyptian Ambassador, Mr. Bury, NEA.

126. Harry S. Truman Library, papers of Truman, folder, meeting of the President with Congressional leaders, 13 December 1950, p.6.

127. Interview with Mr. G. McGhee. See George McGhee, "The US policy towards the Middle East", Department of State Bulletin, 30 July 1950, p.175.

128. NA RG 59 Box 4039 780-512-1051, Department of State to Embassy, London, 9 March 1951, top secret.

The Abrogation of the 1936 Treaty

In general the situation had so deteriorated and the Wafd government was becoming so intransigent, that little or no possibility was left of resolving the conflict with the British.¹²⁹ The position became even more complex in the Middle East when, in 1951, spectacular demonstrations of a nationalistic nature were organised in Egypt against the West.¹³⁰ In March 1951 the American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, apprehended the danger clearly, especially after the Iranian events, when he wrote a letter warning the British that "We believe it is important that agreement be reached with Egypt the soonest otherwise a dangerous and explosive situation might create consequences which would be difficult to counter".¹³¹

While the Americans were continuing their efforts to persuade Egypt not to abrogate its treaty with the UK,¹³² the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations were further complicated when, on 11 April, the Wafd rejected the new British proposals on the Sudan and the evacuation from the Canal Zone.¹³³ As a consequence, on 6 August 1951, Salah el-Din, the Egyptian foreign minister, in a public speech threatened to abrogate the "1936 Treaty before the end of August".¹³⁴ Twenty days after this, Nahas, the leader of the Wafd and the nation, reiterated the same position.¹³⁵ Salah

129. US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.329-30, from the American ambassador, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 11 December 1950.

130. See Campbell, J. Defence of the Middle East, (Prager: New York 1960), p.41.

131. NA RG 84 Box 220 320-1-Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Secretary of State, sent London, 23 March 1951.

132. NA RG 59, 641-84/4-151, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 2 April 1951, p.4. See also Caffery's efforts NA RG 59, *ibid.*, No.1056, from Cairo to Secretary of State. See 641-74/6-1651 from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.1336, 16 June 1951.

133. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation, p.722.

134. NA RG 84 Box 220-320, Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 7 August 1951, from Secretary of State to Cairo, 185.

135. New York Times, 27 August 1951, p.13.

el-Din's and Nahas' statements were made in a very different atmosphere from that of 1950 when the Anglo-Egyptian treaty had last been questioned. Egyptian public opinion left no alternative for Nahas,¹³⁶ so that for the first time during his negotiations with the British, he went so far as to declare publicly his intention to abrogate the 1936 treaty. It became obvious that with the moderate elements in eclipse, Egyptian nationalism was being whipped up to fever pitch and was directed entirely against Britain. The abrogation of the treaty became imminent.

By now there was a real race against time and the Americans were eager to gain some breathing space in order to convince Egypt not to abrogate the treaty. Thus on 10 August Ambassador Caffery suggested that the British government should invite the Egyptian foreign minister to London to break the impasse.¹³⁷ The United States was alarmed about the situation in Egypt, especially as the British had not presented any new proposals to alleviate it. In September George McGhee, the American Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, pointed out to the British that:

We were now faced with what might be our last chance to obtain an agreement with Egypt on the strategic facilities.

Moreover,

...in his opinion the strategic facilities in Egypt were the most important and if it took the Sudan to obtain Egyptian agreement perhaps the Sudan should be sacrificed.¹³⁸

136. A. el-Hadidy, *op.cit.*, p.22.

137. NA RG 59 641-74-8 1051, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.193, 10 August 1951.

138. FO.371/96931, British Embassy, Washington, to Mr. Bowker, FO, 28 May 1952. The draft of Minute of talks which Bowker held with Mr. McGhee on 7 September 1951.

But the stalemate continued despite all these efforts. On 25 September George McGhee tried to persuade the Egyptian government not to take precipitate action with respect to the negotiations of the treaty.¹³⁹

Five days later Ambassador Caffery asked the Egyptian king "if he could hold off the abrogation until we come up with something".¹⁴⁰

Neither the British nor the Americans offered the Wafd a new face-saving formula, and Nahas was left with no other choice but to terminate the treaty. As expected, on 8 October 1951 Nahas concluded his speech before parliament by saying, "It was for Egypt I signed the Treaty, and it is for Egypt that I abrogate it".¹⁴¹ Most of the reasons behind the Wafd's decision have been amply recorded in the secondary literature.¹⁴² What is interesting in this context is, did Nahas abrogate the treaty with the British because of American policy?¹⁴³ Most of the evidence refutes any such explanation. It maybe that American policy, as orchestrated by George McGhee, was a source of irritation to the British, especially when the former paid his second visit to Egypt between 29 March and 1 April.¹⁴⁴ Viewed by the Wafd leadership, it was an indication of US support and may have led the Egyptian government to entertain false hopes, thinking that the United States government appreciated Egypt's tough stance against

139. NA RG 84 Box 219-320 AH secret, Department of State, Memo. of Conv. subject: visit of Egyptian ambassador - participants Moh. K. Abd el-Rahim, Mr. McGhee, 25 September 1951.

140. NA RG 59 641-74/9-3051, from Cairo to Sec. No.387, 30 September 1951.

141. Al-Ahram, 9 October 1951. See also A. el-Hadidy, op.cit., Chapter 5, p.44, footnote.

142. Sabri, Musa op.cit., al-Rafri, Muqadimat thourat. 23 Yulyu Sanat 1952.

143. See S. Marai, Awraq Siyasiya, al-Maktab al-Misri al-Hadith, al-Qahira, Vol.1, p.183; Sabri, op.cit., p.40.

144. FO.371/90108, 1951, Cairo political summary, from Cairo to FO, 4 April 1951. McGhee in his private conversation said "he appeared to have been much impressed by the Egyptian Foreign Minister" (arguments on the Anglo-Egyptian problem). See also FO.371/90130 JE 1051/47 from Cairo to FO, Mr. Chapman Andrews, No.248, "Mr. McGhee was pleased with Nahas Pasha's attitude".

the British. In retrospect, it seems that this was mere illusion on the part of Nahas and his foreign minister, Salah el-Din, for according to the American and the British papers, no solid evidence was found to support such an idea.¹⁴⁵ Maybe, when Nahas and Salah el-Din circulated these rumours¹⁴⁶ justifying their actions, it was because of the well-known fact that the Wafd had not prepared the country to face the possibility of a British counter-action.¹⁴⁷ It was much easier and more useful for the Wafd to place the blame for its failure upon the political tactics of the United States. By taking such action, the Wafd leadership was trying to kill two birds with one stone. First, it could show its supporters that it had never betrayed the national cause or its historic mission regardless of the form of leadership. Second, by claiming American support, Nahas hoped to still the voices of dissent, such as those of King Farouk and the moderate elements in the Wafd (e.g., Faud Siraj el-Din) who were opposed to the idea of the termination of the treaty because they feared the consequences.¹⁴⁸

In fact, the American government was scandalised by the Egyptian action, considering it "to be without validity".¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the United States government tried all possible means to resolve the problem peacefully. American diplomacy attempted to construct a framework for continued British hegemony in Egypt "under a changed name as a part of MEDO forces" to which

145. George McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, pp.365-87. Interview with Mr. McGhee, Washington, D.C.

146. A. el-Hadidy, op.cit., Chapter 5, p.43. See al-Rafii, op.cit.. See also P.J. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt, p.369.

147. Al-Rafii, op.cit., p.35.

148. About Faud Siraj el-Din and the moderate elements in the Wafd, see Sabri, op.cit., p.38; about the King's attitude see NA RG 59 Box 4039-641-74/10-951, from Cairo to Sec.of State, 9 October 1951, 8 pm (secret).

149. Department of State Bulletin, 29 October 1951, Statement by Secretary of State Acheson (released 17 October).

Egypt would acquiesce.¹⁵⁰ On 13 October 1951, the ambassadors of the United States, Britain, France and Turkey presented the Four-Power proposals for a Middle East Command to Egypt. These emphasised the point that "Egypt belonged to the free world and, in consequence, her defense and that of the Middle East in general is equally vital to other democratic nations". Furthermore, the proposals invited Egypt to participate (in the projected Allied Middle East Command) as a founding member with Britain, the United States, France and Turkey on the "basis of equality and partnership".¹⁵¹ The United States showed a greater willingness to support the proposals on the grounds that "the proposals offer the best prospect of relieving the present tension in Egypt".¹⁵² Further, in Dean Acheson's view "[MEDO] will give Egypt and other Arab states something more productive to think about than their feud with Israel and thus pave the way for an eventual peace settlement".¹⁵³

Events had moved faster than was expected. American hopes were dashed when, on 15 October, the Wafd rejected the Four-Power proposals. On the same day the Egyptian parliament adopted decrees unilaterally abrogating the 1899 and 1936 treaties, and Farouk was declared King of Egypt and the Sudan.

Instead of Egypt becoming the first Arab country to join an anti-Soviet collective security network, it provided the Arab states with the formula

150. Truman Library, Acheson papers, Princeton Seminar, Box 76 15-16 May 54, Folder 2, Reel 6, Track 2, page 3.

151. Department of State Bulletin, 22 October 1951, p.647.

152. RG 59 Box 2845-611-74/1-21 52, 21 January 1952, to Secretary from NEA, subject: visit of the Egyptian ambassador, top secret.

153. NA RG 59 780 519-1251, 17 September 1951, from the President, by Acheson, top secret, subject: Importance of Egypt to MEC structure.

for non-alignment. To some extent, American political circles were convinced that Egypt's policy towards the West and Israel would become the model to be emulated by all other Arab states.¹⁵⁴

As for Egypt, nothing could illustrate better why the Wafd did reject these proposals than the letter from the Egyptian foreign minister, Salah el-Din, to Caffery, on 28 October 1951:

The Egyptian Government found nothing new in these proposals...these proposals maintained the British viewpoint and deny Egyptian rights. In fact it could even be said that the recent proposals were by far worse than the 1936 Treaty itself since, according to them the provisional and limited occupation by one state is substituted by an occupation of four powers or more states without any limitation as to time or number.¹⁵⁵

In addition to the above, the timing of the Four-Power invitation was ill-conceived. On 10 October 1951, and just three days before the invitation, most of the opposition leaders warned the Egyptian nation against any joint defence agreement with Western powers.¹⁵⁶ The situation in Iran and the success of the nationalist movements elsewhere¹⁵⁷ in the region had hardened the Egyptian stance vis-à-vis the Four-Power proposals and Anglo-Egyptian relations. In the circumstances, it was difficult for Nahas and the Wafd leadership to appear as if they were yielding to Western pressure, while sacrificing Egypt's national demands. Moreover, the abrogation of the treaty and the rejection of the Four-Power proposal offered a good opportunity for the Wafd to strengthen its popularity

154. Truman Library, McGhee papers, Department of State, memo. of conversation from Ankara to State Department, 21 May 1952.

155. FO.371/90182, British Embassy, Cairo, to FO, 7 November 1951, Alexandria, 28 October to American Embassy.

156. New York Times, 11 October 1956, p.6.

157. NA RG 59 641 74/10351, from Cairo to Secretary of State No.39, 9 October 1951. See also RG 59 674 88/9 751, from Tehran to Secretary of State, No.933, 7 September 1951. "Local press today reports Mossadeq sent tel. to Nahas Pasha expressing sympathy Iran people and government for efforts of Egyptian people to achieve their national aspirations".

and to prove to its opponents that it remained the legitimate leader of the nation. Similarly, by adopting this stand, the Wafd demonstrated to the other political parties that they were lagging behind with respect to the national aspirations of their country.

In this context, the Wafd's political manoeuvres put the United States in a difficult position. The American dilemma was obvious, well described by Mr. Lovett, the American Secretary of Defence, in a telephone conversation with Dean Acheson. Lovett said that "There is no possibility of our being in a position to commit troops, but it was generally felt that we could support the British position in the UN and internationally".¹⁵⁸ On 16 October, Dean Acheson reiterated the same position in his press conference.¹⁵⁹ The American leadership's lack of zeal in taking a firm stand in support of the British view and the Four-Power proposals can be attributed to a number of factors. American policy-makers wished to avoid creating the impression that the Western powers were ganging up against a small nation like Egypt, and so adversely affecting the relationship between the Western powers and other Middle Eastern countries.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, American policy-makers were warned that under these circumstances any future American pressure upon Egypt would have led the latter to conclude "a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union".¹⁶¹ Such an action no doubt would undermine American strategy aiming to build up Middle Eastern regional defence against Soviet penetration. If Egypt could conclude such a pact with

158. Truman Library, Dean Acheson papers, memo. of telephone conversation between Mr. Lovett and Acheson, 16 October 1951.

159. FO.371/90182 ME Command 1951, from Washington to FO.No.3355, 17 Oct.1951.

160. NA CIA National Intelligence estimate, the British position in Egypt, 15 October 1951.

161. NA RG 59 77-00/10-2951 office memo.weekly summary 22-29 October 1951. NA RA 84 320-1 1951 Box 220 from Secretary of State to Egypt, 26 October 1951 (telegram received).

the Soviet Union it could mean that most of the Arab states might turn from their traditional pro-Western line to one of neutrality.

The Egyptian crisis appeared to cement Anglo-American co-operation and on 18 October 1951, in an American cabinet meeting, Dean Acheson stated that the "US is backing the British position in the Egyptian crisis".¹⁶² Ambassador Caffery reiterated the same position to the Egyptian authorities.¹⁶³ However, beneath the surface of this support and cordiality, there remained serious differences between the British and American political outlooks. The Americans' view was that the British should sacrifice the Sudan in return for Egyptian participation in the Middle East Defence Organisation. This American policy appeared to be based on the belief that such a "package deal"¹⁶⁴ could satisfy both Western military needs and Egyptian national aspirations.¹⁶⁵ The British view was that the American strategy was trying to undermine British interests in the Middle East, especially in Egypt and the Sudan.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, by establishing the Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO), the United States was aiming to change Britain's

162. Truman Library, Truman papers, Matthews-Connelly, Set 11, Box 2, cabinet meetings 1951, 18 October 1951.

163. NA RG Box 220 320/Anglo-Egyptian Relations, to Secretary of State from Cairo, secret to Secretary, 19 January 1952.

164. See Eden, *Full Circle*, p.230. FO.371/96919-1952, 10 January 1952, from Cairo to FO. See also Acheson papers, memo. of conversation, Box 67-F, January 1952, Acheson-Eden, 6 January 1952.

165. NA RG 84 Box 220 320.1 Anglo-Egyptian, 19 December 1951, from Caffery to Secretary. NA RG 84 Box 220, to Secretary, Washington, 22 December 1951. The Egyptian foreign minister and Hasan Yusuf informed Caffery that "they are ready to discuss MEC proposals but only on condition that agreement is reached on Sudan".

166. See Eden, *op.cit.*, p.230. Acheson, *op.cit.*, pp.726-7. See also Acheson papers, memo. of conversation, Box 67, Truman-Churchill, 6 January 1951. FO.371 1951/JE 1051-519, conversation between the Secretary of State and US ambassador, 16 December 1951.

position in Egypt from that of an imperial power to that of a surrogate for America, and the British military presence in Egypt would become an integral part of American global strategy.¹⁶⁷

In Egypt the situation was deteriorating while guerrilla activities against the British forces in the Canal Zone were gaining popular support. Caffery in Egypt saw the danger by comparing the situation in Egypt with that in Iran.¹⁶⁸ Egyptian voices were raised demanding the severing of diplomatic relations with Britain, and increased guerrilla activities had forced the British to send reinforcements.¹⁶⁹ The outlook in Egypt was not bright. British intransigence and domestic factors in Egypt were preventing a compromise. From 7 December 1951 onwards, Ambassador Caffery tried to persuade the Egyptian government not to break its diplomatic relations with Britain,¹⁷⁰ and the American government pointed out to Egypt that "such action would be a futile gesture from which in the long run Egypt could gain nothing".¹⁷¹ Egypt heeded this advice, and did not reach the point of no return in her relations with Britain. The atmosphere was very tense, and news

167. RG 330 CD 337 (Defense) top secret, memo. of conversation, subject, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations NE., Mr. Stabler and Greenhill, First Secretary, British Embassy. *Ibid.*, CD 092-2 Egypt. The JCS memo. to Secretary of Defense, 29 August 1951, The importance of the British military position in Egypt.

168. See NA RG 84 Box 220 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian Relations to Secretary, Washington from Cairo 7 December 1951.

169. Eden, *op.cit.*, p.226. See also interview with Egyptian acting foreign minister, Ibrahim Faraj, Cairo.

170. NA RG 84 Box 220 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Caffery to Secretary, 8 December, 13 December and 15 December 1951.

171. *Ibid.*, from Secretary of State to Cairo, 12 December 1951.

of the activities of the guerrillas and the countermeasures taken by the British inflamed an already excited population.¹⁷² It was clear that now the crisis might well reach the point of no return. On 23 January 1952 the State Department urged King Ibn Saud to mediate between Egypt and Britain, thus promoting some type of constructive "dialogue".¹⁷³ But all efforts were in vain as events were to show. Three days later on 25 January 1952, a battalion of armed Egyptian auxiliary police (boulouk nizam) at Ismailia was surrounded in its barracks by British forces and called upon to surrender. Siraj al-Din, the Egyptian Minister of the Interior, ordered them to refuse this ultimatum and instead to resist. In the unequal armed struggle that followed about fifty Egyptians were killed and more than a hundred injured. News of the event caused a serious outbreak of violence in Cairo which was later to be called "Black Saturday", and 26 January 1952 was to become a watershed not only in Egypt's political history, but also in American strategy towards Egypt. The mob violence in Cairo indicated that the Wafd and all other Egyptian political parties, instead of leading the masses, were lagging far behind them politically. Joining a Western military pact had become a taboo subject for most of the Egyptian politicians who did not dare to accept what the Wafd had refused in October 1951.¹⁷⁴ The removal of the Wafd did not relieve

172. The Times, 1-28 December 1951. See Hamrushi, Vol.I, pp.165-6.

173. FO.371/9692 from Washing to FO, 24 January 1952, Sir Oliver Franks, No.158.

174. NA RG 84 Box 220 320/Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 19 December 1951, from Caffery to Secretary.

the tension, despite American hopes for that result. Nahas' successors proved to be a disappointment, unable to develop any concrete and viable social programmes or to restore Anglo-Egyptian relations to normality.

The precarious situation of American strategy after the events of "Black Saturday" can best be seen in Caffery's telegram to the State Department on 26 January 1952, viz., "I am sure it is not necessary to emphasize that yesterday's events have lessened the possibilities of having any defense proposals accepted by a percentage [of the Egyptian government]....A few days ago I was still saying that if we accepted King of Sudan title Egyptians would accept defense proposals with a few modifications but today I wonder".¹⁷⁵ To some degree the 25 January events had marked the final confirmation that any Egyptian participation in Western military pacts was unlikely for some time. In other words, the idea of establishing a defence system centred on Egypt was temporarily shelved at this stage. US or Western global strategy would now depend on attitudes and decisions of individual or regional governments and political forces.

With the dismissal of the Wafd on 28 January 1952, a new era in Egyptian politics began which could be described as the final days of the old political structure. Yet none of the actors on the scene were aware of the consequences of recent events for they continued to act as if nothing had happened.¹⁷⁶ It can be said with some confidence that there were some participants behind the scenes who were well known to the American authorities and who were waiting for the suitable opportunity to come along for them to play their crucial roles in Egyptian political life.

175. NA RG 84 Box 229 Egypt 350, January-February, from Cairo, 26 January 1952, to Secretary,

176. Al el-Hadidy, op.cit., pp.236-7.

Although there was some American recognition of the difficulties which tied the hands of both the Egyptian political leaders and the British, the American policy-makers were afraid that the continued failure to resolve the dispute would lead to another crisis, and this might lead to a communist takeover.¹⁷⁷ Therefore it would be misleading to conclude at this stage that the United States was a mere passive spectator of the deteriorating situation in Egypt. This kind of speculation is substantiated when it is seen that in the days after the Wafd's removal, the United States tried to act as an "honest broker", not willing to antagonise either side in the dispute. From January to June 1952 the American government asked the Egyptian government at various times not to break its diplomatic relations with Britain.¹⁷⁸ During the same period it began to press Britain to adopt a more conciliatory attitude regarding Egypt.¹⁷⁹ Repeatedly it tried to persuade Britain to concede the Sudan to Farouk. In Caffery's view "If the Sudan issue is settled we should be able to answer to this too (MEC)".¹⁸⁰ The Americans would assess their policy depending upon the Egyptian view that "Egypt and Britain were near enough on defence question to warrant negotiations but on the Sudan question we were too far apart".¹⁸¹ Neither the trip by the NEA chief, Henry Byroade, to London and the Middle East in May and June, nor Acheson's discussions with Eden

177. New York Times, 27 January 1952, p.27. See also NA RG 84 Box 229, Egypt 350, January-February 1952, from Cairo to Secretary 26 January 1952, and *op.cit.*, Folder Egypt 360, from Cairo to Secretary, 28 January 1952.

178. NA RG 84 Box 229 Egypt, January-February 1952, From Cairo to Secretary, 27 January 1952. See *ibid.*, 321-1, from Caffery to Secretary of State, 5 May 1952.

179. See Acheson, *op.cit.*, p.727.

180. NA Rg 84 Box 221, to Sec.of State from Cairo, 8 March 1952, pp.6-7.

181. FO.371/96930 1952, From Cairo to FO, 9 May 1952. At various times the Egyptian government reiterated its position to the American ambassador. See FO.371/96932 1952, from Alexandria to FO, 19 July 1952.

in late June convinced the British to alter their attitude vis-à-vis the Sudan question. British stubbornness frustrated Byroade, and on 16 July 1952, just a week before the coup-d'état, he pointed out to the British ambassador that the "British must understand that we cannot blindly support them".¹⁸² The United States was more alarmed about the situation in Egypt than the British who entertained false hopes about turning the clock back. On 21 July Byroade saw the danger that British policy would lead to riots and disorder which the Egyptian authorities might not be able to control.¹⁸³ Forty-eight hours later, the Free Officers overthrew Egypt's monarch and came to power.

It would seem from this analysis that the British continued to view themselves in terms of post-war power on an equal footing with the Americans, and persisted with the same policy, not taking into account either America's interests as the new dominant world power, or the interest of the Western alliance as a whole in the region of the Middle East. Britain's intransigence; and self-deception or delusion adversely affected America's long-term strategy in Egypt, while also weakening American support for any of Britain's expectations to continue or extend her hegemony in the Middle East. Internal conditions and events in Egypt were to define not only the relationship and the policies between two great powers, but also to affect the whole range of their foreign policies towards Egypt. It is necessary therefore to study in detail in the next chapter, the internal situation before the coup d'etat, and its influence on American policy towards Egypt in general.

182. NA RG 84 Box 221, Folder 320, Anglo-Egyptian Relations, from Secretary to Cairo, 16 July 1952.

183. NA RG 59 774-00/7-21-52 from Washington to Cairo, 21 July 1952.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION AND THE EARLY CONTACTS BETWEEN THE OFFICERS AND THE USA

The Internal Situation

In the late forties and early fifties, the United States focused its attention on the internal situation of Egypt and its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began to compile reports on it. In one of these published reports, Kermit Roosevelt of the CIA estimated that the Egyptian king and the ruling class, who constituted less than 5 per cent of the population, were holding 95 per cent of the country's wealth.¹ Roosevelt concluded his study, which was entitled "Egypt Cake for Fate", by saying that in Egypt, "the poor grow poorer and the rich grow richer and everyone grows nervous".²

However, the State Department and the British Foreign Office were expecting a class conflict between the "haves" and the "have-nots" due to corruption and poverty which had become more evident in Egyptian society during that time.³ Moreover, the American embassy in Cairo reported over six weeks from 24 July until 30 August 1950 on internal developments, producing twelve reports, all of them dealing with the deterioration of the internal situation in Egypt. The American ambassador, Jefferson Caffery, perceived the dangers of a possible class conflict. In one of his reports he warned the State Department that it

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1. Kermit Roosevelt, Arabs, Oil and History (London: Victor Gollancz 1949), p.94.
 2. Ibid., p.87.
 3. The FR of the US 1949 volume, Vol.VI, p.187 (secret): from the chargé d'affaires in the UK to Secretary of State, 7 January 1949; FO 371/80600, 1950, British Embassy, Washington, 19 April 1950.

was better for them "to give a careful review of an evacuation plan" for American citizens on account of the deterioration.⁴ The unrest, it was reported, had even spread among the fallahin who were always satisfied with their own traditional life,⁵ and it became obvious that sooner or later Egypt was going to face a social revolution, starting with assassination, looting and mob violence.⁶

A few months before the military coup of 23 July 1952, an American observer submitted a detailed report to the State Department on the Egyptian internal situation, saying that "there was evidence of growing discontent among the peasants, workers, middle-class and intellectuals... one heard much of poverty". At the end of his report he pointed out that the "poverty and the corruption were going to produce Communism".⁷

Two public Egyptian figures, Ahmed Husayn Pasha, the former Minister of Social Affairs in the last Wafd government (1950-1952), pointed out to the American ambassador that "revolution is a matter of months, not years, unless something is done",⁸ and Mohamed Heikal, the well-known Egyptian journalist, reiterated the same position. Both showed their deep concern about the deteriorating situation.⁹ Ambassador Caffery did not hesitate to write an extensive secret report to the State Department, entitled "Stability and Instability in Egypt". In

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4. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774-009-851, from Cairo to Dept. of State, 13 September 1951, subject, "Reporting on the deterioration of the situation in Egypt".
 5. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774-110-851, office memo. Summary of Egypt, 2 August 1951.
 6. FR of US 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 187-8, from the American Embassy, London, to the Secretary of State.
 7. NA RG 59 Box 2847-6480/4-452, to the office of the Chief of NEA Dept. of State, subject, Report on trip to the Near East, January", 30 March 1952, reported to the Department on 4 April 1952.
 8. NA RG Box 4041 774-0019-451, from Cairo to Dept. of State, 19 August 1951 (secret) 361-2; A. Husayn Pasha, 4 September 1950, from Cairo to Department of State.
 9. NA RG 84 Box 206, File 350-I Egypt, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Division of the Near East, 26 August 1949.

its conclusion he raised a very important question, namely, "What can we do about stability in Egypt?"¹⁰ It is obvious therefore that American policy-makers were preoccupied with stability and instability in Egypt.

In order to understand the Egyptian internal situation, we should identify the main actors and their impact upon the stability or instability of Egyptian internal affairs. Furthermore, and with respect to our emphasis on American policy towards Egypt, we should also examine the US view of each one of them.

It is a commonplace that the political history of Egypt in the period extending from the British declaration of independence in 1922 until the military revolution of 1952 was dominated by three main powers: the British, the king, and the Wafd.

In this case we are going to leave aside the first power, concentrating mainly on the second and third, which in our opinion were the most decisive factors in Egyptian internal affairs.

The King

Ever since 1945, the American had realised that the king's popularity had reached its lowest ebb,¹¹ and looked on Farouk as no more than a reactionary landowner,¹² who could not be relied upon to initiate any kind of social reform that would forestall or neutralise any possible popular upheaval.¹³ In 1947, in a top secret discussion with the

10. NA RG 59, 774-008/1351, from Cairo to State Department, 13 August 1951.

11. RG 59 General Records of the Dept. of State, FW 711-83-15 549 SF Dept. of State, May 1945, policy statement, Egypt (secret), p.7.

12. F. Relations of US, Vol. VI 1949, p.187. Also see Murtada al-Marachi. Gharab Min Ahad Farouk, wa Bidayat al-Thawrat al-Misriyah, Beirut 1976, 196

13. NA RG 59 General Records of the Dept. of State 883.00(W) 2, 1949 19 February 1949, from Cairo to Sec. of State No. 1811 482, army message. Also RG 59 Control 3806 Record 11 December 1948, from Cairo to Sec., Unpopularity of King Farouk greatly increased by adverse reaction to his divorce.

British, the Americans did not hesitate to put forward the idea of getting rid of Farouk, by saying, "There ought to be a new king".¹⁴ Simultaneously, it was understood that there was a conspiracy among the army officers "against the throne".¹⁵ Farouk's prestige had declined in the army, and there was a possibility that the army was going to work against him, especially after its defeat in Palestine.

After the Palestine (1948) war, rumours began to circulate in Egypt that King Farouk had no intention of remaining on the throne if he was going to face disorder or trouble.¹⁶ Farouk confirmed this to Kermit Roosevelt, who was a close friend of his at that time.¹⁷

The West began to look for another man, with different qualifications to replace Farouk. They looked for another "Moustafa Kemal to secularize his country...and direct the political energies of the people away from the British towards the reconstruction of their economy and social structure".¹⁸ Neither Farouk as a king, nor the monarchy as a regime was viable for Western needs or demands in Egypt.¹⁹ The West, and especially the United States, considered Farouk a major obstacle to reform in Egypt.

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14. FO.371/62989, to Foreign Office from Lord Inverchapel, 26 October 1947, top secret, p.3.
 15. WNRC RG 59 General Records of the State Department, Decimal File 1945-1949: from Cairo to Secretary of State, 26 November 1947, RG 59 Record of the Department of State 883.00(W) 12-10-1948 (Secret) control army message, "The unpopularity of the King greatly increased especially among army officers".
 16. WNRC RG 84 Box 2 (Top Secret) File 361-1 1948, from the American Consul-General, Alexandria to J. Patterson, Alexandria, 26 July 1948.
 17. K. Roosevelt, *op.cit.*, pp.24-7.
 18. FO.371/90148, D. Bendali, Cairo, 1 December 1951, to Foreign Office (secret).
 19. K. Roosevelt, *op.cit.*, p.96. Also see FO.371/96927, from Australian Embassy, Washington, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 21 March 1952.

Thus after the Cairo riots in January 1952, Western political circles were keen to have a strong and honest government in Cairo that could eliminate corruption at all levels. They thought Ahmed Naguib el-Halily would be the man most qualified to head such a government and achieve their purpose in reforming the country and purging it of corruption. But Farouk dismissed him as prime minister, in return for a £1million bribe, paid to him by the Egyptian industrialist, Ahmed Abboud, who was anxious to avoid paying £5million in tax.²⁰

The Abboud scandal was a turning point in Farouk's relations with the Americans. Ambassador Caffery considered him a "hopeless case".²¹ The king, it would seem, lost most of his credit with the West in general and the United States in particular because of his corruption. He was surrounded by a weak entourage whose corruption had become outrageous, and it was hard for someone like him to put an end to the role and influence that this entourage had over him. The British ambassador perceived the danger of the situation. He asked his American counterpart to intervene in order to induce the king to rid himself of Karim Thabet and others who were mainly responsible for Abboud scandal.²² Caffery's intervention went unheeded. It became clear that Farouk was not ready to sacrifice his weak entourage at any cost.

In March 1952, four months before the revolution, Kermit Roosevelt visited Egypt. During his visit, he asked Hassan Youssef Pasha, the deputy chamberlain of the court, to choose for him some Egyptian public

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- 20. Mousa Sabri, Malik wa Arba'a Weizrat; interview with Mustafa Amin, Cairo, 28 January 1985.
 - 21. Al-Maraghi, op.cit., p.200. See also interview with Mustafa Amin, Cairo, 28 January 1985.
 - 22. FO.371/96876, 1952, Minute FOJE 1018/174, Mr. Allen, 2 July 1952; FO.371/96876, 1952, from Foreign Office to Alexandria, No.050, (secret) 1 July 1952.

figures to become members of a proposed American-Egyptian society. The king gave the names of Karim Thabet and Elias Andarwawes, and as a result Kermit Roosevelt hastened to tell Youssef Pasha "to drop it and forget it for ever".²³ In the same month, the Americans gave Farouk a last chance: they urged him to redistribute part of his land, as had been done in Iran, but Farouk ignored their suggestion.²⁴

All the evidence pointed to the fact that by 1952 Farouk was a major obstacle in securing United States interests in Egypt. Yet Farouk himself tried very hard to woo the United States by nominating Ali Maher on 28 January 1952, who was on good terms with the Americans, to succeed the last Wafdist government.²⁵ On 28 January 1952, Ali Maher formed his cabinet from pro-Western elements such as Hassouna Pasha, Mohamed Hassan Pasha (formerly ambassador to Washington), and Shousha Pasha, who had good connections with American organisations in Egypt, such as the Naval Medical Research Unit, No.3. Thus the Soviet newspaper, Pravda, accused all of them of being instruments of the Americans and the British.²⁶

But Farouk deceived himself. He did not realise one important fact, to wit, that the Americans wanted social reform and stability in order to avoid any upheaval in the country. Thus Caffery and the Americans considered Farouk responsible for all the troubles in Egypt,²⁷ and the chief obstacle to the formation of a majority government which would accept

23. Interview with Hasan Yusuf Pasha, Cairo, January 1985.

24. Al-Maraghi, *op.cit.*, p.199; interview with K. Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., May 1984.

25. FO.371/96870, 1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, No.210, 28 January 1952.

26. FO.371/96872, 1018/65, from Moscow to Africa Department, joint press reading service, Pravda, 3 February 1952.

27. Interview with Mustafa Amin, Cairo, January 1985.

the British defence proposals.²⁸ The Americans, in fact, expected Farouk to be overthrown soon.²⁹

The Political Parties : the Wafd

In 1949 a few months before the Wafd's assumption of its responsibilities as the ruling party, the American embassy in Cairo began to study the Wafd's programme concerning social reform. They concluded that the previous Wafdist government, which lasted for two years from 1942 to 1944, "had not shown great interest in social and economic reform",³⁰ because "many of its leaders had much to lose...;"³¹ that social and economic reform was not consistent with the interests and images of the leading members of the Wafd party, who were mainly big landowners, and partly from notable families. But they also discovered that corruption had spread amongst Wafd leaders to the point where it had become hard to uproot it. The Americans became convinced that the Wafd leaders were more concerned with the problem "of making personal fortunes rather than introducing social reform".³² But they were still hoping that the corrupt Wafd of 1950 could lead the nation (al-umma) to settle the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. Nevertheless, the Americans were themselves ignoring the fact that the leadership of the Wafd at that time was quite different from that of 1936; that between 1936 and 1950 Egyptian society had experienced historic changes which

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- 28. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Collection, oral history, interview with J. Wesley Adams (second secretary, Cairo, 1950-52), oral history interview No.155, Copy 3.
 - 29. Interview with K. Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., and interview with David Evans, Washington, D.C.
 - 30. NA RG 85 Box 206, File 350-1, Egypt, American Embassy, Cairo, memo. to Ireland from P.J. Hella, 16 February 1949.
 - 31. NA RG 84, File 361-1, from Ireland to Patterson, 17 February 1949; K. Roosevelt, *op.cit.*, p.94.
 - 32. NA RG 59 Box 4014, 774/00/5/950, to Department of State, from Paris, 1037, 9 May 1950.

had their impact not only on the leadership of the Wafd, but also on that of other political organisations. Thus extremist and nationalist groups began to impose themselves upon the Egyptian political scene, and greatly influenced the shaping of Egyptian political life. In these circumstances, it was difficult for the Wafd of 1950-1951 to assume the same role at the head of the National Front as in 1936, without eliciting objections from elsewhere. Similarly, it was difficult for Moustafa el-Nahas Pasha at this stage to play the role of "leader of the nation" without taking a hard line vis-à-vis the British demands and Western military needs, especially since the Wafd, as a popular party, was having setbacks and in a decline.

It seemed imperative, therefore, for the Wafd to do its utmost to compensate for its loss of popularity during the Abdin palace incident of 1942, by pursuing more radical policies. The Wafd leadership needed to demonstrate its extremism vis-à-vis the British in order to cover up its weakness. It was also in its interest to attract people's attention from the deteriorating internal situation by concentrating on the Anglo-Egyptian dispute.

The Wafd under the secretary-generalship of Fouad Sirag el-Din, and the influence of Mohammad el-Wakeil and Ahmed Hamza, was very different from the Wafd under the old guard. The new leadership tried very hard to strengthen its relations with the Palace, since they had a different conception of the Wafd's relationship with the king.³³ In order to make

33. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774.00/4-2850, secret file, from Cairo to the Secretary of State, No.916, 8 April 1950. It was noticed that the Wafd would allow Farouk to "rule as well as to reign". Concerning the relations between Farouk and the Wafd, see NA RG 84, 36-11, from Cairo 1241, 31 May 1950. See also M.A. el-Hadidy, "Mustafa el-Nahas", unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS, University of London 1985, pp.227-30.

up for their shortfall in popularity, they bound themselves to the Muslim Brotherhood, considering this alliance as one of the most important factors of the Wafd's election victory in January 1950.³⁴

From the very beginning, however, the American policy-makers realised the nature of these changes in the Wafd's character, but they still hoped that the Wafd, as the majority party, would settle the Anglo-Egyptian dispute for ever, or at least achieve a modus vivendi to ease the situation for both sides, thus starting a new chapter in Anglo-Egyptian relations. But as soon as the Wafd assumed its responsibilities, all the American expectations were dashed. Thus in June 1950, six months after the Wafd came to power, the officer at the Egyptian desk in the State Department perceived the danger that the Wafd under these circumstances "would inspire a violent press campaign against the US and UK in order to cover up its inefficiency".³⁵ Thus Moustafa el-Nahas, instead of easing the situation between Egypt and the UK, had begun, according to Ambassador Caffery, to act as "a street politician".³⁶ It was consequently hard to convince Nahas to accept any formula which did not lead to "evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley". Nahas in fact had become a prisoner of the promises he had made to the Egyptian people, who accepted Wafd corruption in return for its ability to achieve national goals.³⁷

34. NA RG 59 Box 4014 4-00/2/050, to Department of State from Cairo, Caffery No.240, 10 February 1950, "The status of the Muslim Brotherhood Society". The American policy-makers viewed the Muslim Brotherhood as more dangerous than communism. See US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.271-8 (a policy statement prepared in the office of Near Eastern Affairs).

35. US FR Vol.V, 1950, Egypt, pp.289-99 (top secret), memo. by the officer in charge of Egypt to the Director of the Africa and Near East Office.

36. US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.322-3.

37. New York Herald Tribune, 9 September 1851, "Matters of Fact", by Stewart Alsop, "The three pashas and a king".

In one of the Anglo-American discussions about the Middle East situation, the American Assistant Under-Secretary of State pointed out to his British counterpart that the Wafd was "the main obstacle to achieving any settlement".³⁸ Ambassador Caffery reiterated the same position in an analysis of why the Wafd should have become more extremist than others in the Anglo-Egyptian discussions.³⁹ Being on the spot, Caffery saw the danger of the extremist Wafd not allowing "any foreign troops to stay at the Canal Zone during peace-time", a policy which conflicted with American strategic plans in the area.⁴⁰ Even before the Wafd's abrogation of the 1936 Treaty, Stewart Alsop, the famous American columnist, wrote, "It is absolutely hopeless to try to arrange with the present Egyptian government any kind of compromise settlement".⁴¹

The Anglo-Egyptian confrontation had thus reached the point of no return. Nahas Pasha abrogated the 1936 Treaty, and would not accept the four-power proposals. The situation had deteriorated and tension had increased, together with mounting animosity towards the British and Americans. The Egyptians were living on the top of a volcano which threatened to erupt.

The eruption arrived on 26 January 1952. On that day mobs rioted and burned Cairo. These riots merely indicated that the Wafd had lost control as well as its legitimacy as the majority party. On "Black Saturday" King Farouk conferred with Ambassador Caffery, and on the same

38. US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.296-7, memo. of informal conversation, US-UK discussion, London, 19 September 1950.

39. US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.302-3, American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 3 October 1950.

40. US FR Vol.V, 1950, pp.329-30, from the American Ambassador, Cairo, to the Secretary of State, 11 December 1950.

41. New York Herald Tribune, 9 November 1950.

night he dismissed Nahas' government for the last time.⁴² However, before the dismissal of Nahas, Caffery prevailed upon him not to sever political relations with the UK, and immediately before his removal from power, Nahas' government proclaimed a "state of emergency". After gaining some credit from this, it was better for the Americans to accept that the corrupt Wafd must go, having failed either to resolve the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, or to initiate social reform.⁴³ The overwhelming majority of the Wafd and the popularity of its leadership neither served American interests nor met Western needs in this very important area.

Out of power, in April 1952 the Wafd suggested the drawing up of a secret agreement between the United States and the Wafd's secretary-general. In his proposed agreement, Fouad Sirag el-Din demonstrated his readiness to sign an agreement with the British within two weeks, offering Egyptian participation in the Middle East defence organisation (MEDO). He went on to say that "He would bring Egypt openly to the side of the West in general and the US in particular". The American embassy in Cairo did not take the offer seriously, not considering it a "bona fide" offer, since they believed that Sirag el-Din and his colleagues were manoeuvring into a position where they hoped for American support in the next election against el-Hilaly.⁴⁴ The Wafd's political manoeuvres and its conspiratorial plans in handling its relations with the other political powers were clear, and its desire to reassume

42. FO.371/96872 JE 110/8 1656, from Moscow to Africa Department, 3 February 1952; FO.371/96872 JE 1081/61, British Embassy, Prague, 6 February 1952, to Foreign Office (confidential).

43. Interview with Ibrahim Faraj Pasha, Cairo, 17 January 1985.

44. NA RG 59, 611-747-552, American Embassy, Cairo, to Department, No.2947, 5 April 1952.

responsibility as the majority party was well known. All indications proved that the Wafd, regardless of its corruption, had restored its popularity, so the ancien regime would have to be done away with.

The Americans soon discovered that the dismissal of the Wafd was not the solution for Egypt's problems when they realised that Egypt had begun a new chapter in its political life, characterised by quick changes of government from January until 23 July 1952. Four cabinets followed each other in quick succession, one of them lasting only for a day, and instability was all too apparent. Ambassador Caffery described the situation in a telegram to the State Department, saying that "Egypt has entered once more into the type of musical chairs".⁴⁵ "The short-lived governments"⁴⁶ became outrageous, and the instability and irregularity demonstrated the nature of Egyptian political life which had an impact on all aspects of Egyptian society.⁴⁷ In May 1952 this led Ambassador Caffery to reject strongly any idea of giving Egypt financial support from the World Bank. Caffery's attitude can be attributed to the instability of the Egyptian situation and also to his willingness to exert pressure on the ancien regime - as the Americans did at the end of Mossadegh's era in Iran - and to allow it to fall into an irrevocable decline, thus paving the way for new blood, which could be responsible for the next stage of development, and would have the ability to work along lines that favoured Western

45. NA RG 84, 36, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 28 June 1952.

46. FO.371/9695 1952, British Embassy, Cairo, to Foreign Office, "Note on the economic aspects of the Anglo-Egyptian/American policy towards Egypt".

47. Ali Amin, Hakadha Tuhkam Misr, 2nd edn. (Dar Akhabar al-Yum: Cairo 1952), pp.172-88; NA RG 59 Box 5398, office memo. 28 January 1952, Economic Report for w/e 25 January 1952. See also Box 5398, Economic Report for w/e 16 March (17 March 1952). Also, FO.371/96956, 1952, Foreign Office, 14 March 1952, British Embassy, Cairo, May 1952.

interests. The Egyptian situation was such a frustrating one for the American government that it played an important part in the American cabinet meeting discussions.⁴⁸ They viewed Egypt as being "in a state of impasse".⁴⁹ All evidence showed that something was about to occur.

The Young Army Officers

There were other elements that began to impose themselves on Egyptian political life and had their own impact on the internal Egyptian situation. On returning from the Palestine campaign in March 1949, most of the young officers showed signs of bitter discontent.⁵⁰ Their undisputed loyalty to the king began to be questioned in different circles. It was known for many years that the Egyptian army had been used by the king as his praetorian guard against predominantly civilian politicians,⁵¹ or any possible upheaval, but the Egyptian army's humiliating defeat in Palestine was a turning point not only in its relations with and attitude towards the king, but also towards the whole regime.⁵²

The American embassy in Cairo observed that by January 1949 the young army officers had already begun to circulate pamphlets voicing their resentment at the political situation, concluding that "only an army can save Egypt and it should assume the largest role in the coming

48. H.S. Truman Library, Matthew J. Connelly, Notes on cabinet meetings, January 1952, 28 March-25 April 1952.

49. Ibid., 27 January 1952.

50. P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics, p.59.

51. Ibid., p.66.

52. Interviews with Mustafa Amin, Cairo; Ali Sabri, Cairo. Waguib, Kalimati Lil Tarikh, p.25, Gamal Abd el-Nasser, The Philosophy of the Revolution, p.11-12.

renaissance".⁵³ This development led the inner circle of the American embassy in Cairo, three days later, to consider the possibility of a military coup d'etat in Egypt.⁵⁴ Although the idea of the rumoured military overthrow had in fact been shelved, the discontented army officers did not stop the circulation of these pamphlets, which reflected their resentment of the arms scandals and the whole political situation.⁵⁵ At the end of 1950, the American embassy in Cairo began to collect a number of reports from reliable sources which indicated the increasing gap between the young army officers and the king. As this grew, it was hard for the king to restore their confidence.⁵⁶ During that time the Americans identified three main issues which dominated the political atmosphere of Egypt, namely the high cost of living, the Anglo-Egyptian question, and most importantly, the open talk by junior army officers of a coup d'etat.⁵⁷ The American embassy in Cairo gradually came to the conclusion that this group of army officers was about to impose itself upon Egyptian political life.⁵⁸ Its members were no longer passive spectators of the political scene, and it was concluded that "they must be watched as a potential source of a coup d'etat".⁵⁹ The following year, the State Department also started to pay greater attention to the Egyptian army situation. This matter was one of the

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- 53. NA RG 84 Box 206 File 350-1, Egypt, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 15 January 1949, "Second Manifesto by the Army Officers"
 - 54. Ibid., to Patterson, Military Attache, from P.J. Halla, 18 January 1949, subject, "Future details on rumoured military coup d'etat".
 - 55. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774.00/7-2550, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 25 June 1950, ibid., 26 June 1950. Interviews with Abdel Monim Amin, Cairo, and Ihasan Abdul Kuddus, Cairo.
 - 56. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774 774.5/1/135, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Secretary of State, 13 November 1950, conversation with Gallad Pasha, ibid., 6 October, to Department of State, from Cairo, "Present atmosphere of Instability".
 - 57. Ibid., Cairo No.1105, 11 November 1950, to Department of State, subject, "Harold Hoskins' report on the Middle East trip".
 - 58. Ibid., Box 4026 774-551/9-1450, from Cairo to Department of State, 14 September 1950, "Army dissatisfaction"
 - 59. Ibid., 774-55/9-1450, from Cairo to Department of State, 11 September 1950.

main issues in the exchange of top secret reports and telegrams between the Department and the American embassies in Cairo and London.⁶⁰ The internal situation in Egypt was worsening and the Cairo riots were ample demonstration of this. The American and British embassies realised that the army "has the situation in hand at the present time".⁶¹ The Cairo riots showed that the Egyptian army was the most decisive factor in Egyptian internal affairs. The king was handicapped and the political parties had proved their inability to handle the situation. After the Cairo riots, the inner circle of the American government showed its interest in Egyptian stability, considering "the internal security in Egypt to be of great interest to US security interests in the Near East".⁶²

All the developments which showed that the army was the most powerful element pushed American intelligence to contact the young army officers. Abd el-Moneim el-Naggar, a military intelligence officer before the 1952 revolution, recalls, "The British and Americans contacted the young army officers, asking them about their intentions and attitudes towards the next stage". Abd el-Moneim Amin, a former member of the Revolutionary Command Council, reiterated this statement.⁶³

For the West the officers were sympathetic to their cause, and their opposition to communism was crystal clear to American diplomatic

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- 60. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774.00/8 2151, from London to Secretary of State, No.957, 21 August 1951 (top secret).
 - 61. PREM 91/114952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, telegram No.91, 27 January 1952; FO.371/96870, 1951, from Cairo to Foreign Officer, Sir Ralph Stevenson, No.195, 27 November 1952. See also Baybars el-Din, Fathi Radwan Yarwi Asrar Hukummat Yulyu, p.101, al-Baghdadi, Mudhakkirat pp.43-4.
 - 62. NA RG 59 Box 5384 874-50/5-652, memo. by Maj.-Gen.Olmsted to Secretary of State, 5 May 1952, "Training of Egyptian police officers".
 - 63. Ahmad Hamrush, Shuhud Thawrat Yulyu, p.392; interview with Abdi Monim Amin, Cairo.

circles.⁶⁴ This evaluation seemed to be confirmed by the various articles which had been written by General Fouad Saddek, who was considered a leader of the Free Officers by the West, in Akhabar al-Yom.⁶⁵

The rift between the young army officers and the king became wider and the conflict between the king's interests and the young army officers' demands became more defined than before. The officers did not hesitate to challenge the king openly in the officers' club election, which was considered from the officers' point of view as the first test of their strength vis-à-vis the king, and was described by Ahmed Hamrush as "public confrontation between the king and the Free officers".⁶⁶ The American embassy in Cairo, in one of its secret telegrams to the State Department, showed its sympathy for the young army officers, "who generally have a university education and often an advanced degree in engineering and law", and at the end of the telegram the embassy made clear its favouring of the young army officers' candidates as opposed to the king's choice.⁶⁷

It is easy to understand how the American authorities were attracted by the straightforwardness of the army officers, who were less likely to give in to corruption. It was more to the Americans' advantage to deal with the military officers on account of their army training to obey orders without objection. Furthermore, the group of army officers

64. US For.Rel. Vol.V, 1950, pp.221-5: US General Policy in the Near East, paper drafted by the officers in charge of Egypt.

65. FO.371/96873, 1952, from War Office to Foreign Office, record of conversation between military attache and Ahmed F. Saddek, Cairo, 1 January 1952. Also interview with Mustafa Amin.

66. Interview with Ali Sabri, Cairo; Hamrush, Qissat Thourat 23 yulio, Vol.I, p.165.

67. NA RG 59 Box 4016 774-55/1, 1952, 19 January 1952, from Cairo to Department of State, "Incident concerning the Egyptian Army Officers' Club annual election".

In fact, the only young free officers who had a university education were Mohamed Naguib and Khalid Mohey el-Din.

was limited in number, so it was easier to persuade them. Also, the army officers did not argue too much between themselves, because argument requires presenting different points of view to be debated, accepted or rejected. On the other hand, the professional politicians in the different political parties were swayed by their voters, by their political situation and previous commitments to their supporters. The army officers, in this case, did not have such commitments, nor a clear attitude towards the people except in the manifestos which reflected their own discontent.

It is clear, then, that the American authorities looked towards the military establishment in Egypt to achieve at least part of American policies in Egypt. Furthermore, the political atmosphere in Egypt did not encourage the American embassy to take any active measures to support the civilian elements in restoring the political situation. It was understandable from their previous experience that it was hard for them to support any reforming civilian group vis-à-vis the Wafd, which had gained a great deal of popularity on account of its abrogation of the 1936 treaty and its rejection of the Four-Power proposals, thus making difficult for any other civilian power to compete with the Wafd in popularity, regardless of its corruption.

Nevertheless, the Americans did not hesitate to contact some of the civilians who demonstrated their eagerness for reform and their rejection of the corruption of the regime. However, these elements rejected any possibility of dealing with the Americans on the grounds that "they advocated the monarchical regime and were not going to work

against it; simultaneously, they were not ready to accept American conditions for land reform".⁶⁸

So the Americans found that it was in their interests to look for an alternative in someone or some group who would accept their conditions and achieve their ends. These efforts, in addition to those mentioned above, define the Americans' attitude towards the professionals in Egypt. This became clear, when Dr. Ahmed Husayn, the former Wafd minister, tried very hard to induce them to support a "popular reform government". The American embassy was firm in showing its reluctance to take further steps in the Egyptian political game, declaring that "the US is not in the game of making or breaking governments".⁶⁹ At the end of this conversation between Dr. Husayn and the representative of the American embassy in Cairo, the latter asked about the relations between the king and the young army officers. Dr. Husayn confirmed to him his knowledge that the "young army officers hate the king".⁷⁰

Theoretically, the reformist politicians in Egypt, and those against the regime, showed their eagerness for a change, which would face up to communist penetration, but practically, it was unrealistic to achieve that without sacrificing the whole political regime, which was inconsistent with their point of view. Nevertheless, a few of these civilian elements, like Dr. Ahmed Husayn and the newspaper publisher Mustafa Amin understood American objectives and aims in Egypt. They realised that

68. Ahmed Hamrush, Shuhud Thourat Yulia, Mustafa Merai to Hamrush, Vol.V, 4, p.458.

69. NA RG 59 Box 4014 774/001/10. 551, from Cairo, No.882, October 1951, to Department of State, Continued activities of former Minister of Social Affairs.

70. Ibid., p.4.

the Americans were looking for new forces that were not politically corrupt or who were prepared to reform the social system. They sought new players who were not loyal to the king or to the traditional political parties.

Kermit Roosevelt confirmed to the researcher that Ahmed Husayn and Amin contacted him secretly at the end of 1951 and tried to induce him to meet "the representative of the discontented young army officers". Roosevelt was reluctant to do this since his government, especially before the Cairo riots, still hoped that the Wafd would ease the tension, and that the king remained a friend of the United States. Therefore, they did not see any need to take any covert action to topple him at this stage, or to support his opponents. Despite all this, Kermit Roosevelt began to collect some information about the discontented young army officers, and did not close the door completely on further contacts with Husayn and Amin.⁷¹

The Cairo riots constituted a turning point in Egyptian political life, as neither the king nor the Wafd were able to control the situation, and the Americans began to think seriously about a role for the army in politics.⁷² This assessment by the American and British diplomatic missions in Cairo was the key factor behind Kermit Roosevelt's trip to Egypt where he stayed for three months. During his stay in Cairo, he tried to induce the king to achieve a peaceful revolution by initiating land reform, but the king's reluctance to accept Roosevelt's advice was the beginning of the end of his role.⁷³

71. Interview with Kermit Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., 1984.

72. FO.371/96879, 1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, Sir Ralph Stevenson, No.195, 27 January 1952.

73. Interview with Kermit Roosevelt; al-Maraghi, *op.cit.*, pp.195-6.

The Early Relations between the CIA and the Free Officers

The American intelligence service began to look for other political actors who had the ability to handle the situation. Most of the scholars and writers were not able to substantiate the theory that there were previous contacts between the Free Officers and the Americans before the coup d'etat of 23 July 1952. This is the view held by Mohammed Heikal, Nasser's friend and confidant, who asserted that the relationship between the USA and the military started on the night of the revolution and not before.⁷⁴ Moreover, Mohammed Naguib, the nominal leader of the junta, asserted that the Free Officers contacted the American embassy through Ali Sabri on the eve of the revolution, to ask the embassy to inform the British that the coup was purely an internal affair.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Miles Copeland, a former CIA agent, maintained in his book The Game of Nations, that Kermit Roosevelt did everything in his power to pave the way for a strong leader to assume control. Copeland asserts that Kermit Roosevelt held meetings with selected members of the Free Officers as early as March 1952.⁷⁶ Various sources have confirmed this story. In an interview with the researcher, Kermit Roosevelt, the head of the Middle East section in the CIA, said that "in December 1951, Nasser contacted them through Mustafa Amin and Ahmed Husayn and was therefore known to the American intelligence services as the leader of the Free Officers' organisation".⁷⁷

74. Mohamed Heikal, Cairo Documents, p.34; his Book, Nahnu wa Amrika; p57

75. Mohamed Naguib, Egypt's Destiny, pp.118-9.

76. Copeland, Game of Nations, pp.51-3; Hamrush, op.cit.; Maraghi, op.cit., p.200.

77. Interview with Kermit Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., 1984.

Mustafa Amin stated to the researcher that he "had met Nasser for the first time after the Palestine war at one of the officers' parties which had been held in honour of those officers who had fought in Palestine". During the party, Mustafa Amin noticed that there was a big difference between Nasser and his colleagues, and that they respected him more than anyone else, although he was not of the highest rank amongst them. In his discussions with Nasser, the latter mentioned that "corruption is everywhere and the solution is not to be sought in words but in deeds".⁷⁸ After that, Mustafa Amin wrote a long article in Akhbar al-Youm on 9 September 1951, entitled "Looking for a Leader".⁷⁹ This information is consistent with Roosevelt's story about Amin's liaison between him and the Free Officers, and this is also confirmed in Mohamed Heikal's book, Bain al-Sahafa fa wa al-Siyasah. One may term this stage which extends from 1951 to March 1952 as the period of overtures or initial contacts between the two sides. The CIA knew about the Free Officers, and the Free Officers had their covert contacts with them through secret mediators.

After the deterioration of the internal situation, the CIA agents had, by March 1952, resumed their activities in Egypt. This time Kermit Roosevelt knew more about the Free Officers: for example, their names, their attitudes and intentions.⁸⁰ At the same time, the Free Officers drafted the movement's famous six principles, thus at least proclaiming the aims of their intended revolution.⁸¹ According to Khaled Moheidin,

78. Interview with Mustafa Amin, Cairo, 28 January 1985.

79. Akhbar al-Youm, 9 September 1951.

80. Interview with Kermit Roosevelt (as above).

81. P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation, p.107.

the leftist officer and former member of the RCC, Nasser asked him to omit any mention of the Americans and to concentrate on the British in the publications of propaganda for the movement. Nasser asked him not to allude to any links in the pamphlets between American and British imperialism, since he was keen to avoid American anger at this stage.⁸²

We may assume that in March 1952 Nasser had not met Kermit Roosevelt personally. This is not to deny the bilateral relations between the two sides dependent upon secret mediations.⁸³ Then, if we compare Khaled's statement to that by Hamrush to the effect that Nasser, since March, was keen to woo the Americans with Kermit Roosevelt's statement to the researcher that by March 1952 he knew more about the Free Officers' organisation, we will see that Nasser, to some extent, began to move in two political directions. He tried to intensify his campaign against the British occupation and the regime's corruption in order to gain popular support for his movement. Further, he developed his relations with American intelligence through "secret channels" in order to curtail the possibility of British military interference on behalf of the king and the ancien regime. An examination of the reasons for Nasser's tactics leads us to discover that he tried to rely on the Americans secretly, but was at the same time careful not to link the movement with Anglo-American imperialism, since that would have been in contradiction with their images, namely, "the destruction of colonialism".

The Americans understood this very well, and Kermit Roosevelt established close contacts and conducted exploratory talks with Nasser's

82. Hamrush, Vol.4, p.150; Hamrush, Vol.1, p.187.

83. Interview with Kermit Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., 1984.

group in secret. It is a combination of reasons, rather than one alone that explains why both sides tried to keep their contacts secret. It was after all difficult for someone like Kermit Roosevelt, known as a CIA agent to Egyptian security,⁸⁴ and under their surveillance,⁸⁵ to approach the discontented army officers directly and openly at first, especially since the latter were considered the most powerful opposition elements in Egypt. Any kind of open contact would have led to the alienation of the sovereign on the grounds that it would have been seen as American interference in Egyptian political affairs. The discovery of these contacts would have complicated American-Egyptian relations at a time when it was necessary to include Egypt in Western defence pacts. Moreover, there is no comparison between Roosevelt's task in Iran against Mossadegh and his mission in Cairo. In Iran he tried to help the Shah to restore his authority vis-à-vis Mossadegh. In the Egyptian case, he was plotting against the sovereign and his legitimate authority. As for the conspirators, it was difficult for them to have direct contacts with foreign intelligence agents for fear that it would lead to the discovery of their conspiracy. Some of them were known for their activities against the monarchy, especially since the Officers' Club elections.⁸⁶ Furthermore, some of them were under surveillance.⁸⁷ Thus both the Americans and the officers had to be cautious in their contacts.

84. Although Roosevelt came to Egypt at that time as a political adviser to the President, he was known to Egyptian security circles as a CIA agent. See al-Maraghi, op.cit., pp.199-200, interview with Ibrahim.F. (Messiha) Pasha.

85. Murtada al-Maraghi asked his security officers to observe American businessmen's activities in Egypt, and to put Kermit Roosevelt under surveillance. Ibid., pp.200.

86. Hamrush, Qissat Thowrat 23 Yulia, Vol.1, pp.143-7.

87. Interviews with Ali Sabri, Cairo, 6 February 1985 and Abdil Monim Amin, Cairo, 21 January 1985; Hamrush, op.cit., pp.146-7, 192.

Nasser's Tactics to avoid the Discovery of his Conspiracy

As a leader of the Free Officers' organisation, Nasser was keen not to take any open action which would lead to the discovery of his role. He reported publicly on 23 July 1953 that in the summer of 1949 the premier, Ibrahim abd el-Hadi, accused him of unlawful political activities in the presence of General Osman Mahdi, the army chief of staff.⁸⁸ It thus became unsafe for him, or for any of those in the inner circle of the Free Officers' organisation, to contact the Americans openly since they were under the surveillance of various security forces.⁸⁹ He therefore chose some officers and public figures from amongst those whose loyalty to the king and the status quo were unquestioned to make these contacts. One of these was Ali Sabri, the chief of air force intelligence and a member of a wealthy family.⁹⁰ Sabri's position and his social background were of great advantage to the movement. King Farouk trusted Sabri enough during his bitter dispute with the discontented young army officers over the Officers' Club elections, to nominate him as a member of the governing board of the Club on 17 July,⁹¹ assuming that the trusted intelligence officer was not going to betray him as his predecessor had done. Murtada al-Maraghi, the Minister of Interior and War, pointed out in his memoirs that Ali Sabri doublecrossed him and did not give him any information about the Free Officers' movements, an omission that was inconsistent with his position as chief of air force

88. Hamrush, op.cit., Vol.I, p.138. See also P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics, p.60.

89. Ibid., p.62; Hamrush, op.cit., pp.137-8; Naguib Kalimati, Lil Terikh, pp.28-9.

90. Gallal Keshk, Kalimati 1,1-mughaffalin, pp.11-12. See also Maraghi, op.cit., pp.156-7.

91. Hamrush, op.cit., Vol.II, p.188.

intelligence. Thus Maraghi preferred to rely upon the political police to keep their eye on those he suspected.

As usual, normal regular contacts between the intelligence services of the friendly states, Egypt and the USA, existed at that time.⁹² Through his position, therefore, Ali Sabri had good relations with Colonel David Evans, the American air force attaché who concentrated his attention on the junior army officers, considering them to be the source of any political upheaval that might occur.⁹³ Sabri and Evans exchanged information about the status quo and the young officers' attitudes. Whether Sabri gave Evans details of the Free Officers' organisation or no is not important. What was of great advantage to the revolutionary elements was knowing the extent to which the Americans would accept their movement. Advance knowledge of American attitudes and reactions towards the projected coup d'etat would give the movement some kind of guarantee against any possible counter-attack. On the other hand, it gave the Americans the opportunity to gain a grasp of Egyptian internal affairs, and the political and ideological background of the revolutionary elements. Thus the exploratory contacts which took place earlier helped both sides to some extent to assess their respective positions for what was to come later.

The second mediator between the Free Officers and American intelligence was Colonel Abd el-Moneim Amin. An examination of the reasons for Amin's mediation helps us to understand his success in the

92. P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation, p.108.

93. Interview with Colonel Evans, Washington, D.C. 17 December 1984.

task he undertook. Amin's appearance and his wealth⁹⁴ did not lead anyone to suspect that he was working to topple the socio-political system. He had good connections with the Americans and as Ali Sabri pointed out to the researcher, "Amin had good relations with Mr. Lakeland, the CIA officer in the American Embassy in Cairo".⁹⁵ This raises an important question. Was there any connection between Lakeland and the revolution? In the letter from Mustafa Amin to Nasser we find that "Lakeland, who was working under the cover of his diplomatic immunity, protected the revolution by sending a secret telegram on 23 July to Dean Acheson, confirming that he knew of the revolutionary elements and denying any relation between them and the communist organisations in Egypt".⁹⁶

If we compare Amin's statement with the account of Ali Sabri, we find that it is consistent with the latter's assertion that "Nasser contacted the Americans through intermediaries", which to some extent confirms Abd el-Monim Amin's role as a middle-man. Amin's wealth and his social prestige provided a good cover under which he was able to contact the Americans without arousing any suspicions concerning the nature of his relationship with them. Needless to say, Nasser utilised to the full Amin's privileged position in order to achieve his goals.

94. Interview with Abil Monim Amin, and interview with Mustafa Amin. When Sadat became president, he tried to exploit Amin's previous relations with the Americans by asking him to renew his approaches to the Americans secretly in order to improve American-Egyptian relations after 1971. Interview with Abdil Monim Amin. See also Abdullah Imam, Enqilab 15 Mayo, p.157.

95. Interview with Ali Sabri.

96. Heikal Bèin, Al Saïh afa wa al-Siyasa, p.188.

It also explains why Nasser had chosen him to be a member of the Revolutionary Command Council although he was not a founder member of the Free Officers' movement.⁹⁷

Nasser used the regular contacts between the American intelligence service and the Egyptian one, for example, in choosing Abd el-Monim el-Naggar, an Egyptian intelligence officer,⁹⁸ who was related to Queen Narriman. He was therefore unlikely to be suspected. From time to time Naggar asserted to the Egyptian queen that according to his information the Free Officers were working to support the king, not to get rid of him.⁹⁹

The fourth intermediary was Hassan el-Tohami, whose role is mentioned in most of the published and unpublished sources as a mediator between Nasser and the CIA before and after the revolution,¹⁰⁰ and who also played the same role under Sadat, Nasser's successor.

The Egyptian Military Mission to the United States

Leaving aside the story of the relationship which existed between the Free Officers and the American CIA, direct contacts took place between the Egyptian military officers and American military staff, which were to have their effect upon the Egyptian army officers' image of and attitudes to the ancien régime.¹⁰¹

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- 97. P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics, Table 1, pp.47-8. In his table, Vatikiotis mentions that there were eleven founder members of the Free Officer's movement, and Naguib was not one of them. If we added Amin, we would find that neither of them was a founder member, but they later became members of the RCC.
 - 98. Interviews with Ali Sabri, Hamrush, Abd el-Fattah Abu el-Fadel, the former Deputy Director of Egyptian Intelligence Service, London 1985.
 - 99. Murtada al-Maraghi, op.cit., pp.191-3.
 - 100. Miles Copeland, The Game of Nations; Eveland, Ropes of Sand; Hamrush, Vol.I; interviews with Ali Sabri, Abdil Monim Amin, Ahmed Hamrush, Kermit Roosevelt, and Mustafa Amin.
 - 101. Interview with Colonel David Evans.

In 1950, Egypt started a new military training programme, especially after the British withdrew their military mission from Egypt in 1949.¹⁰² Egypt then sent 300 of its military officers to the USA.¹⁰³ The American government encouraged this policy by offering some vacancies in its advanced military schools to the Egyptian officers.¹⁰⁴ In view of the escalation of the Cold War and weakening of the British position in Egypt, as well as the consequence of their willingness to safeguard Western strategic needs in Egypt, following the Truman Doctrine, the American policy-makers were anxious to strengthen relations with Egypt. With the deterioration of Anglo-Egyptian relations, the US was keen to avoid any possibility of Soviet-Egyptian contacts in the military field.¹⁰⁵ The US was also motivated by a desire to curtail any communist penetration into the area. This inspired the Americans to add a secret item to the Four-Point programme agreement whereby Egypt was allowed to send its military staff on a training programme to the USA.¹⁰⁶ In return for the above, Egypt had signed the "Battle Act Lists" which forbade Egypt from "exporting any battle items to the Soviet countries".¹⁰⁷ Ever since that policy was formalised, Egypt continued to send large numbers of its military officers to the USA. According to American papers, Egypt sent more than fifty officers from different branches to study there, where they

102. P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation, p.106.

103. Interview with David Evans, Washington, D.C., 17 December 1984.

104. NA RG 59 Box 24023 774-5/5-251, from American Embassy, Cairo, to State Department (top secret).

105. Interview with Ibrahim Faraj, the former Wafd minister: "The US did its best, especially after the abrogation of the 1936 Treaty to prevent Egypt from asking the Soviet Union for military aid which would be followed by the arrival of military experts".

106. NA RG 84 Egypt 500 1953-1955, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, Washington, 4 March 1953.

107. NA RG 59, to American Embassy, Cairo, from Department of State, 11 January 1952, NA RG 59 Box 5367 874/00TA/2-2 352, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 23 February 1952.

were impressed by the American way of life and began to compare the difference between their commanders and those of the Americans.¹⁰⁸

A few months before the revolution, the US offered the Egyptian military students a new position within the American military schools, which were normally given only to officers of NATO countries. Ali Sabri, the Egyptian air force officer, one of the Free Officers, was given that opportunity. He attended a six-month intelligence course at Colorado air force base where he became qualified to be the Chief of Intelligence in the Egyptian air force¹⁰⁹ upon his return to Egypt. The American government made a similar offer to Captain Essam M. Khalil (Free Officer) who shortly after his return home followed in Ali Sabri's footsteps, and was nominated his assistant, later replacing him when Sabri was given new responsibilities under Nasser's regime.¹¹⁰

It is difficult to establish the exact number of Free Officers who went to the US before the revolution. Most of the books and original sources do not list them. None of the sources which exist have been substantiated. Nevertheless, we shall compare Baghdadi's list¹¹¹ and that of Hamrush,¹¹² with the American sources which mention the officers' names. In doing so, we find that at least six out of fifty of the officers who were attending courses in the American schools were members of the Free Officers' movement; for example, Moslim Mahmud Nofal, Galal Mohammed Ibrahim Zeid, Ali Samir el-Tarzi, Captain Tahar Zaki, Youssef Saudi and Abd el-Monim Soleiman el-Assar.

108. NA RG 59 Box 4026 774-551/8-452, from Cairo to Department of State, 4 August 1952 (meeting between Major Ali Sabri and Col.D. Evans); interview with David Evans, Washington, D.C., December 1984.

109. Interview with Ali Sabri, Cairo, February 1985. Also see NA RG Box 4019 774/111/2-551 CS/E, from Egyptian Embassy, Washington, to Department of State, December 1951.

110. Yaccov Caroz, The Arab Secret Service, pp.20-1.

111. Baghdadi, op.cit., Vol.II.

112. Hamrush, op.cit., Vol.VI(5).

The American sources do not give too much assistance to a researcher looking for the officers' names. For example, in the "Top Secret" correspondence between the American embassy in Cairo and the State Department, no mention is made of the names of the officers. This is clear in one of Caffery's telegrams in which he says, "It is noted that several air force officers have recently been receiving training in the USAF schools, and each of them has an excellent record".¹¹³ In August 1951, he restated the same position.¹¹⁴ It is therefore difficult to establish the identity of the officers, and whether they were members of the Free Officers or not. Despite this, Abdil Monim Amin, the former RCC member, confirmed to the researcher that Hassan Ibrahim and Abdel Latif Baghdadi, both members of the RCC, received their training in the USA before the revolution.¹¹⁵ We may assume that even if they were not approached by the American intelligence service, they were impressed by the American style of life as the others were. Furthermore, Gamal Salem, one of the founder members of the Free Officers, went to the USA for medical treatment. While he was recuperating, he studied land reform and demonstrated his interest in the American way of life.¹¹⁶ It is clear that at least three RCC members out of eleven of the executive committee of the Free Officers' movement had been to the USA for different reasons. If we add Ali Sabri to them, we find that four of the key figures in the revolution were in the USA shortly before the revolution took place.

113. NA RG 59 Box 4023 774.5/5-251 (top secret), from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, 2 May 1951.

114. Ibid., 774.00(W) 8551, from Cairo to USHA (top secret), to State Department, 5 August 1951.

115. Interview with Col. Abdil Monim Amin.

116. FO.371/96986, 1952, British Embassy, Cairo, 20 September 1952, to Foreign Office; NA RG 59 Box 4019 774.01/11/12-551 CS/E, from Egyptian Embassy, Washington, D.C., to Department of State, 1 December 1951.

The American inspiration and impact on the revolutionary elements in the Egyptian forces was viewed as most important by Ali Sabri, a close friend of David Evans, when he stated to Evans, "The attendance of many Egyptian officers at US service schools during the past two years has had a very definite influence on the coup d'état in Egypt, and after a while, the officers' decision was made to take action within the army, to rid the armed forces of corruption and inefficiency".¹¹⁷

A combination of reasons oriented the Egyptians, and especially the young army officers, from lieutenants to lieutenant-colonels, towards favouring the USA. One of these was that in all of its history, the USA had not had any colonial ambitions in the Middle East region, and had not tried to gain a foothold in Arab countries, as had France and Britain. Since the Second World War, American propaganda had had its effects upon the Egyptians. The US began to exploit the situation by intensifying its propaganda in the area, presenting the US as a supporter of democracy and freedom throughout the world.¹¹⁸ The American image attracted the attention of the Egyptian people who were keen to gain American support in their battle against the British who were considered as their chief enemy because of their military presence in the Canal base, and their refusal to accept Egyptian demands for their evacuation of the Nile Valley.

The lower- and middle-ranking officers always had bad memories of and bitter feeling towards the British Military Mission, which had been in charge of their training until 1949. The feeling of humiliation

117. NA RG 59 Box 4026 774.55/8-452, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, 4 August 1952 (secret), memo. of conversation between Ali Sabri and David Evans.

118. Mohamed Heikal, Nahnu wa Amrika, p.55.

which resulted from the British military presence in Egypt had escalated and spread among the young army officers, who considered the British presence to be the main reason behind the weakness of the Egyptian army and the ignorance of their senior officers.¹¹⁹

The Egyptians in general, and the young officers in particular, did not consider the USA to be the main outside power responsible for their defeat and humiliation in the Palestine war of 1948. They viewed the British as being responsible for the disaster, since they considered that it was the latter's policy which led to the Palestine crisis.¹²⁰ On the Palestinian battlefields the Egyptian army officers also discovered that there were regular Soviet troops fighting against them among the Jewish troops.¹²¹ This doubtless alienated Egyptian army officers from the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The young Egyptian officers neither forgot nor forgave their defeat in the Palestine war, which was considered a turning point in their hostile attitudes towards the ancien régime and the British occupation.

In reassessing their position, the American policy-makers fully understood that the army was the only power which could change the status quo. The young army officers became the potential source of upheaval, for they no longer supported the monarchy. The king was no longer a symbol of national sovereignty and dignity for them as he was before 1942. The relations between them and the king reached a point of no return after their triumph over his candidates in the Officers' Club elections in December 1951, and this triumph was considered the

119. Ahmed Hamrush, Qissat Thourat 23 Yulia, pp.91-137; Naguib, Kalimati Lil Tarikh, p.22; interview with Abdil Monim Amin, Cairo; el-Rafai, Mugaddimat Thourat 23 Yulia, pp.165-66.

120. Heikal, Nahnu wa Amrika, p.56.

121. WNRC RG Central Records of the Department of State, Decimal File, 1945-49, Control 2709, 5 February 1949, from Cairo to Department of State, Army Message No.5 (secret).

beginning of the end of the monarchy in Egypt. Their victory was viewed by the Americans¹²² as an indication that King Farouk had lost his legitimacy as ruler of Egypt.

The young officers' social and political background influenced their attitude towards the Wafd and other political parties. The lower-middle-class officers had been impressed by the political concepts and principles of the Young Egypt movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as communist groups. Furthermore, the deteriorating political situation to some extent defined their attitude towards the Wafd and the others.¹²³

The Road to Revolution

The sequence of events moved rapidly. The dismissal of the Wafd in January 1952 brought Ali Maher's government to the fore, but it lasted only a short time, and by March 1952, Naguib el-Hilali, the former Wafd dissident, had succeeded Ali Maher.¹²⁴ The composition of el-Hilali's government was appreciated by the American ambassador in Cairo. In Caffery's view, "Hilali's government is composed of honest patriotic men favourable to the Western world in general, and the US in particular".¹²⁵ The State Department was equally optimistic, considering el-Hilali as the only one who could save Egypt from corruption.¹²⁶ The el-Hilali government for its part, tried to woo the Americans in different ways, by putting the purge of Egyptian political life at the top of its agenda.

122. Interview with David Evans, Washington, D.C., 1985.

123. P.J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser*, p.114; see also Hamrush, *Qissat Thowrat* 23 Yulia, pp.149-51, 244.

124. Mousa Sabri, *op.cit.*, pp.66-7.

125. NA RG 84 Box 4015 774.00/7-152, 1 July 1952, from Cairo to Secretary of State (secret).

126. NA RG 84 Box 221 Folder 320.1, Anglo-Egyptian relations, from Secretary of State, to Cairo, 21 July 1952.

Nevertheless, in situ, Ambassador Caffery, instead of supporting these reformist elements, let the government fall over its failure to deal with corruption, informing the State Department, that he "refused to intervene to save Hilali".¹²⁷ Caffery accused the British of being mainly responsible for the fall of Hilali's government, and the deterioration of the Egyptian political situation in general. In Caffery's view, as a result of British policies, Egypt was going to face another state of chaos, as had occurred at the end of 1951 and beginning of 1952.¹²⁸ Assistant Secretary Byroade in his meeting with his British counterpart put forward the view that the failure of Hilali's government meant that Egypt would "return to a period of disturbance such as occurred last winter".¹²⁹

Although the Americans saw the danger, they did not try to save the Hilali government, which was regarded as the last resort by the West. On 2 July 1952, the State Department informed its representative in Cairo that "We do not believe that the US should involve itself in the Egyptian political crisis as the UK suggested".¹³⁰ The American attempt to play a peripheral role and not get openly involved in Egyptian political affairs reflected how the United States was less concerned than Britain in safeguarding the ancien régime. The American policy-makers tried to convince the British that their policies had failed to produce the hoped for results, and that the American role would become the decisive factor in shaping both Western policy interests and strategy in the Middle East, which used to be regarded for a long time as a British sphere of influence.

¹²⁷ NARG 59 Box 4020 - 774/-317-252. From Cairo To: sec. of state

¹²⁸. FO.371/96876, 1952, from Foreign office to Washington, 5 July 1952; also NA RG 59 Box 4015 774.00/6-3052, Weekly Summary of events, Egypt 24-30 June, "New government being formed".

¹²⁹. FO.371/96930, 1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 10 May 1952; Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, JE 1052/329.

¹³⁰. NA RG 84 Box 221 Folder 320, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Secretary of State, to Cairo, 2 July 1952.

The United States was no longer prepared to follow in British footsteps nor to play a passive role in the region. Whatever the reasons behind it, the American's reluctance to save the Hilali regime no doubt paved the way for the young army officers to take control twenty days after the resignation of the first Hilali government.

After the Cairo riots in January 1952, the US played a covert role behind the scenes in holding up the IMF's loan to Egypt and in reducing American investments there.¹³¹ The American Treasury Department foresaw the dangers. A few weeks before the coup d'état its reports signalled alarm that, "If the deterioration in the economic and financial situation continues progressively, the resultant social and economic pressure will correspondingly increase and might become very serious".¹³² However, their recommendations went unheeded, and instead of supporting Egypt's request to obtain financial aid, Caffery pressed hard to hold it up.¹³³ The United States policy held to the assumption that its economic pressure might lead to the destruction of the ancien régime, and would help another faction to come to power easily, without the possibility of public resistance. The economic pressure on the ancien régime no doubt had its impact on the stability of Egypt, which the Americans were keen to maintain. Simultaneously, after the Cairo riots, the Free Officers began to pay attention to the question of stability. As Baghdadi recalls in his memoirs, "It was hard to predict what was going to happen.... we had to move quickly".¹³⁴ The advent of the revolution became a matter of days.

131. NA RG 59 Box 5398, office memo. 28 January 1952, from Cooper to Dorsey, Economic Report for week ending 25 January 1952.

132. NA RG 84 Egypt 501/63/52, to the Ambassador from J.F.L. Ghiardi, "Egypt, financial situation", 3 June 1952.

133. NA RG 59 Box 5398, office memo. to W. Stabber from Economic Report of week ending 16 March, 17 March 1952.

134. Baghdadi, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.43-4.

The ancien régime was under attack from all quarters. Akhbar al-Youm, the pro-American newspaper,¹³⁵ organised a big campaign against the establishment, especially the Wafd party. It maintained that corruption had spread in Egypt, becoming flagrant especially from January 1950 to February 1952.¹³⁶ This kind of campaign, which had been well organised by Mustafa Amin,¹³⁷ no doubt resulted in the deterioration of the Wafd's popularity and reputation amongst the Egyptians, especially amongst the younger generation, whether or not that was Mustafa Amin's intention. His contributions undermined the Wafd party's prestige to some extent, and paved the way for new blood to come to power.

At the same time, the American press, especially the New York Times, reiterated the position of Akhbar al-Youm.¹³⁸ On 22 July, just a few hours before the revolution, it indicated that the army could move to topple the king and his regime.¹³⁹ The revolution became inevitable. David Evans, the American air force attaché in Egypt, asserted to the researcher that on 13 July 1952, he obtained information confirming that the Free Officers were going to move in the next few days to achieve their ends. He passed this information on to Ambassador Caffery.¹⁴⁰

On 20 July, Caffery took the unusual step of issuing a statement which confirmed that, "The policy of the United States is not to interfere

135. Heikal, Bain al-Sahafa wa al-Siyasah, M. Amin's message to Nasser, Amin pointed out the development of his relations with the Americans.

136. Akhbar al-Youm, 9 February 1952. For more details see Ali Amin, Hakadha Tukam Misr, March 1952.

137. Interview with K. Roosevelt, Washington, D.C.

138. New York Times, 23 July 1952, p.31.

139. Ibid.

140. Interview with Colonel D. Evans, 5 September 1984.

in the domestic politics of another country, and this policy has been strictly adhered to in this embassy".¹⁴¹ On the following days, and forty-eight hours before the army took over, Caffery repeated the same position to Mr. Creswell, the British chargé d'affaires.¹⁴²

This repetition has different significant meanings: firstly, that the Americans tried very hard to deny that they had had previous contacts with the conspirators, or, secondly, that they would take covert measures to topple a friendly regime. It was a kind of camouflage that had been used by the Americans to hide their role, since in the event of the discovery of their involvement and the failure of the conspirators to achieve their aims, it would have resulted in a complete deterioration of American-Egyptian relations for a long time to come. It is also possible that the Americans tried to allay the fears of the conspirators that there would be no foreign interference, especially from the British. Finally, the Americans tried to hint to the British that if anything occurred, there would be no need for their interference in Egyptian internal affairs. From the very beginning, the Americans demonstrated their opposition to any possible British military interference to abort the operation on the grounds that it was a purely Egyptian internal matter. All indications showed that the revolution was just a matter of hours away.¹⁴³

141. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/17-353, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.24, 20 July 1952.

142. FO.371/196877, from Alexandria to Foreign Office, 21 July 1952.

143. NA RG Box 234, 361.2 Sirry CAB/1952, from American Embassy, London, to Paris, 21 July 1952. See also, New York Times, 22 July 1952.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNITED STATES AND THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION:

The Safety of the Coup d'Etat

On the eve of 23 July, a group of young army officers seized power in Cairo with a minimum of bloodshed and resistance. The city was occupied and the reins of power were firmly in the hands of the Free Officers.

The story of the 23 July 1952 revolution has been told several times. However, what is significant for our purpose here, is the implicit and explicit reactions of the United States in dealing with the revolution. One question may be put forward, why did the Young Army Officers, despite their early contacts, openly approach the American embassy in the first hours of their military coup? The answer lies in what Sadat said when he wondered, "Would the British intervene on behalf of the king?"¹ Similarly, Mohamed Naguib, the nominal leader of the junta, said in his published memoirs, Egypt's Destiny, "We are determined to give the British no excuse whatever for acting against us, as they have acted against our revolutionary predecessors in the past".²

In Alexandria reports were reaching the palace that British troops, mobilising in the Canal Zone were preparing to advance towards Cairo.³ These reports were circulating everywhere.⁴ The Free Officers tried to curtail the possibilities of British military interference and also to

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1. Anwar el-Sadat, Revolt on the Nile (London: Allan, Wingate 1957), pp.117-8.
 2. Mohammed Naguib, Egypt's Destiny (London: Victor Gollancz 1955), p.121.
 3. B. McBride, Farouk of Egypt: A Biography (London: Robert Hale 1967), pp.190-1.
 4. Interview with Abdil Monim Amin, Cairo, 12 January 1985. Also see Heikal, Bain al-Sahafa wa al-Siyasah (Beirut 1984), p.188.

allay the fears of the British and other foreigners who suspected the conspirators of acting on behalf of the Communists or the Muslim Brethren.⁵

At three o'clock in the morning, the Free Officers openly contacted the American embassy.⁶ They sent their first message to the British embassy through David Evans, the American air force attache. In the message they informed the British that "the coup was purely an internal matter affecting Egyptians only", and that they would organise resistance to any British military intervention.⁷ Needless to say, these early contacts between the Free Officers and the American embassy were of great importance to the revolutionary officers.

On 23 July, US Ambassador Caffery met the British charge d'affaires to ask him about British intentions in the event that King Farouk would ask for their intervention to save him.⁸ The American embassy in Cairo was not only concerned for the safety of the coup d'etat, but the American State Department did not hesitate to point out from the very beginning to the British that "foreign intervention would be disastrous..."⁹ Acheson also indicated to the British representative in Washington that, "According to the State Department analysis, the army action was purely an internal affair".¹⁰ Furthermore, the Americans officially informed the British

5. Naguib, Egypt's Destiny, op.cit., p.110.

6. Ali Sabri met David Evans and Abdel Monim Amin went to the American embassy. Interviews with David Evans, former American air force attache in Egypt, 1951-55, and Ali Sabri and Amin. See Naguib, Egypt's Destiny, p.119; al-Baghdadi, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.55-6.

7. Interview with David Evans, Washington, D.C., 17 December 1984; Naguib, op.cit., p.119; FO.371/96877-1952, from Alex. to Foreign Office, 23 July 1952, Mr. Creswell, No.1060. Also interview with Mr.Ihasan Abdel Koudous, Cairo, 9 November 1985.

8. FO.371/96877-1952, 23 July 1952, from Alex to Foreign Office. The British charge d'affaires said, "I replied my personal view was that this was a purely internal question".

9. NA RG 59 Box 4015, 774-00/7-2.352, 23 July, outgoing telegram from Acheson to Cairo and London.

10. Ibid.

Foreign Office that the "United States would not intervene with British troops on behalf of King Farouk".¹¹ Clearly, from the very outset of the coup, the US did everything possible to prevent the British from taking any active measures that might have led to the failure of the Free Officers' task. Nevertheless, American policy-makers were afraid that the British might intervene militarily against the coup d'etat on the grounds that it was led by the Muslim Brethren or the communists. The Americans' concern over this made them endeavour to assure the British of the non-involvement of either communists or the Muslim Brethren.

Once again, to prevent any possibility of British intervention, the Americans assured the British of the ideological position of the Free Officers, and the State Department countered the British impression that the Muslim Brethren or the communists were behind the coup, and informed the Foreign Office on 24 July that "they knew everything about the revolutionary elements and were aware of their attitudes".¹²

Furthermore, Henry Byroade, the US Assistant Secretary of State, did his best to convince the British ambassador in Washington that it was difficult for someone like Ali Maher, the nominated prime minister, "to be used as front by the communists".¹³ It thus became obvious that the US was siding with the officers. Indeed, according to Colonel Abdel Monim Amin, the Americans asked the British some time before rebel troops were sent in to depose Farouk, not to "smash the revolution".¹⁴

11. FO.371.98677-1952, from Washington to Foreign Office, Sir Oliver Frank, telegram No.1404 of 23 July.

12. FO.371.7896878, Egypt and Sudan, from State Department, Washington, to Foreign Office, 24 July 1952.

13. FO.371.96878-1952, from Washington to Foreign Office, Sir Oliver Frank 24 July 1952.

14. Interview with Col. Abdel Monim Amin, Cairo.

Regardless of their previous relations with the Free Officers, the American policy-makers reassessed their political decisions, which were dependent upon a number of studies, such as secret intelligence reports, one of which was entitled "Probable Consequence of a British Military Occupation of Cairo and Alexandria". This secret report revealed that military action would lead to a growth and strengthening of extremist groups. For example, the Americans thought that the communists would move considerably closer to their propaganda goals of winning wide acceptance for their proposition that the "West is imperialist and is plotting a military occupation to dominate the Near East".¹⁵ This was consistent with American policy at the time. A month before the revolution, Acheson warned Anthony Eden during their ministerial talks in London in June 1952, that, "The use of force in the Delta would have consequences in the rest of the Middle East which would be incalculable".¹⁶ The American policy-planners were well aware that poverty and socio-political instability were the surest causes of revolution, and that any attempts to go against the popular will would lead to disaster. As a result, the State Department and the American embassy were unwilling to let the British destroy the coup, especially since the coup itself did not conflict with American interests. The American administration was preoccupied with building up a defence system in the Middle East area, and was not prepared to sacrifice its long-term strategy on behalf of the British. Finally, the Americans showed their willingness to secure the success of the coup d'etat.

15. NA Intelligence Report No.5977, 29 July 1952.

16. Truman Library, Acheson papers, memo. of conversation, ministerial talks in London, 24 June 1952.

From the early hours of the revolution, the military elements tried to show the pro-Western and anti-communist character of their cause. This was obvious when the Free Officers' spokesman went to the American embassy on 24 July 1952, and he confirmed that "the internal security would be maintained at all costs and emphasised the total anti-communist nature of the coup".¹⁷ Moreover, on the same day, Naguib reiterated this position at his press conference.¹⁸ Furthermore, a few hours before deposing King Farouk, Major Hussain Naggar, the spokesman for General Naguib and the Free Officers, conveyed a message to the American embassy to the effect that, "The army's policy is to clear up the internal situation". He added that, "Newly-organised intelligence branches of the army and police [were] intended to enlist the help of the Americans and the British in organising an anti-communist campaign".¹⁹ By adopting such a policy, the Free Officers tried not only to confirm American support, which was essential for the success of their operation, but also to stop a potential British military intervention.

The chain of events had moved rapidly, and the officers realised that the monarch had to be challenged. The revolutionary elements understood very well that Egypt was still a monarchy, and King Farouk was recognised as the ruling monarch. If he were to escape before his abdication, he could become a problem for the new regime. Although the officers were not agreed among themselves over what to do with King Farouk, on 25 July 1952 Major Naggar gave the American representative

17. NA RG 59, Box 4105-774-00/7-2552, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.182, 25 July 1952 (secret).

18. Naguib, *Egypt's Destiny*, p.128.

19. NA RG 59 Box 4105-774-00/7-2652, from Alexandria to Secretary of State, Washington, 26 July 1952 (secret).

the impression that they were going to get rid of the King in the next few hours.²⁰ Before the army gave its ultimatum to the monarch, on 26 July, it was understood by the Americans that the king had played his last card and had lost his legitimacy. The army showed it had the situation in hand, even though the king was still negotiating with the Free Officers. On 25 July 1952, Acheson instructed Caffery to tell Ali Maher, the prime minister nominated by the Free Officers, that the United States regarded the events of the past few days as "internal affairs.... At the same time the US desires to make clear that it is following the situation with close attention and expects constitutional authorities will continue....In this connection we are encouraged by statements attributed to Naguib that foreigners' lives and property will be given full protection".²¹ With this the Americans burned their bridges with Farouk. Accordingly, Caffery conveyed a message to the king from the State Department some twenty-four hours before his abdication. This message presented the American view: "We do not wish to become involved in this situation".²²

With this message the United States, to a certain extent, gave de facto recognition to the new regime. The latter had proved its ability to keep the situation in hand. The Americans, however, wanted to keep the king alive, and showed their willingness to avoid unnecessary bloodshed before the operation.²³ They had no other option in this

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- 20. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/7-2652, from Alexandria to Secretary of State, 26 July 1952.
 - 21. NA RG 84 Box 229, Folder 350 Egypt, July-August, from Secretary of State to Cairo, No.151, 25 July 1952.
 - 22. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/7-2552, telegram from American Embassy, Cairo, from Acheson to Caffery, 25 July 1952.
 - 23. Interview with Col. A. Amin. Also interview with David Evans, Washington, D.C.

critical situation. They understood that any harm to the king might precipitate British military intervention to protect him and resident foreign communities. That is why the Americans were eager to prevent the operation from falling into British hands, and thus jeopardising the military coup.

Farouk's intentions regarding keeping his throne were obvious. Anthony Eden wrote in his memoirs that, "From 8.00 am onwards, the king was frequently on the telephone to the US ambassador. He repeated each time more clearly that only foreign intervention could save him and his dynasty".²⁴ The last straw was loaded onto the camel's back. Caffery conveyed Farouk's message to the British, who then confirmed to Farouk that "Her Majesty's Government could not intervene with force in what appears to be an internal Egyptian problem".²⁵ Ambassador Caffery was firm with Farouk and did not lead him to indulge in false hopes. The ambassador pointed out to the king that there was "no question of British intervention...unless such intervention became necessary for the protection of foreign lives and property".²⁶ Needless to say, Farouk lost all hope of any British military assistance. He failed to understand that it was primarily the American contribution behind his own demise.

Accordingly, King Farouk, on 24 July, asked Caffery, "If an American naval vessel could be supplied to get him out of Alexandria".²⁷ On the following day, Farouk repeated his request to Caffery and the State

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- 24. Eden, Full Circle, p.240. See also NA RG 59 4015 774-00/7-2352, from Alexandria to Secretary of State, 23 July 1952.
 - 25. NA RG 59, Box 4015 774-00/7-2352, No.416, 23 July 1952, from London to Secretary of State (top secret).
 - 26. NA RG 59 Box 4026 774-55/7-3052, from Cairo to Department of State, 30 July 1952, "The military take over".
 - 27. NA RG 59 Box 2040 774-11/7-2452, from Cairo to Department of State, 24 July 1952.

Department. The Americans did not hesitate to point out to the king that "No American warship or plane could come to Egypt for this purpose".²⁸ Farouk was caught between his desire to preserve his life and his intention to keep his throne for his son. Under the present circumstances, however, the potential dangers of military intervention confronted him. With all the doors closed, he yielded to the demands of the soldiers unconditionally. Farouk claimed in his memoirs, published in the Empire News that Caffery asked him "to fight for time".²⁹ If Caffery had asked him to do that, it meant nothing more than a way of demonstrating to the king his inability to face the coup.

The Americans may not have helped Farouk to escape, but they also clearly contributed to the collapse of the monarchy. Yet despite the pressure of the soldiers, Ambassador Caffery did his best to ensure the king's personal safety.³⁰ Abdil Monim Amin, a member of the RCC, confirmed that "Caffery asked Farouk to abdicate his throne in return for keeping his life".³¹ David Evans repeated the same story.³² If we assume that Caffery did his utmost to save the king's life, he also averted the possibility of a British military intervention. In this way Caffery killed two birds with one stone. Firstly, he kept the coup safe from any British military intervention, which without doubt would have affected its success. Secondly, he made certain that the coup was

28. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-7/2552, outgoing telegram. Also see Acheson papers, 24 July 1952. FO.371/96878-1952, from Washington to Foreign Office, 25 July 1952.

29. Empire News, 12 October 1952, "Farouk", p.6.

30. FO.371/9687-1952, from Alexandria to Foreign, 26 July 1952. Caffery to his British counterpart, "I have again contacted Naguib who has repeated his earlier assurance re. king's personal safety". Mohamed Heikal, Cairo Documents, p.46.

31. Interview with Col. A. Amin.

32. Interview with David Evans.

a bloodless affair. In this sense the coup was unique in comparison with other military takeovers in the Third World. Had the leaders of the coup allowed themselves to be dragged through a bloodbath, it would no doubt have led to a situation in which many opponents would have demanded revenge. Later this would have led to chaos. On 26 July, the king abdicated his throne in favour of his six-month-old son, Prince Ahmed Fouad II. The revolution had triumphed.

Egypt and the United States in the Revolutionary Era

Mohamed Heikal, in his book Cairo Documents, considers the American role in the new regime. He says, "Her representative was the last man to see the remains of the old regime, and the first in contact with the new".³³ In his published memoirs, Naguib described Caffery as "One of the few foreign diplomats [in] who[m] [we believe] we could trust".³⁴ The Soviet press grumbled about the links between the Free Officers' coup and "Anglo-American imperialists".³⁵ The military leaders showed their willingness to co-operate with the West from the very start. Intelligence reports and early contacts between the two prior to the coup stressed the moderation that was likely to characterise a junta formed by the young army officers.

From the beginning the revolutionary elements understood that it was difficult for them to gain Western confidence and to build up their image

33. Heikal, Cairo Documents, p.36.

34. Naguib, Egypt's Destiny.

35. Tass quoting Middle East leftist journal. It was felt that the advent of the new military dictatorship would open the Egyptian entry into MEDO. The Current Digest of Soviet Press, Vol.IV, No.30, p.13, September 1952.

nationally and internationally, especially if they cut all relations with the past. Therefore they chose General Mohamad Naguib as the figurehead for this movement, and raised him to the summit. Similarly, they designated Ali Maher, a former prime minister at the outbreak of the war, as prime minister of the first revolutionary government. During the war Ali Maher had been forced to resign because of his unfriendly attitude towards the British.³⁶ The monarchy was provisionally retained.³⁷ The revolutionary elements asserted by their deeds that they were not influenced by the Muslim Brethren's aspirations.³⁸ The Communist Party remained outlawed, and workers' riots in Kafer el-Dawar during August 1952 were brutally suppressed. As a result of all these events, Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State, expressed his optimism about the new regime by saying, "In Egypt, things are going well".³⁹

Each side had its own reasons to be hopeful. For the new leaders it was understandable that the Americans were sympathetic to Egyptian goals of complete independence, which was consistent with the Free Officers' aims. The Americans, concerned with containing Soviet penetration in the area, considered Egypt as a regional power that would become a cornerstone in any anti-Soviet collective security network.⁴⁰ They thought that the realisation of Egyptian national aspirations could persuade Egypt to be the first Arab state to make peace with Israel.⁴¹

36. Beer, Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society (Prager 1970), pp.101-2.

37. Gail Meyer, Egypt and the United States (New Jersey: Associated University Press 1980), p.44.

38. The Times, 19-23 August 1952; Hamrush, Qissat thawrat 23, Vol.I, pp.287-92.

39. Truman Library, M. Connelly papers, notes on cabinet meetings, 5 September 1952.

40. NA RG 59 774-5 MSP 12-2952, from Acheson to Harriman, Washington, 31 December 1952.

41. NA RG 49 774-00/7-3152, memo.of conversation between Abba Eban and Mr. Hart, subject, Israel's view on Egyptian situation, 31 July 1952.

One American scholar has remarked that, "At the outset of the revolution there was much sympathy for the new regime, which appeared to be the long awaited answer to Egypt's most serious internal problems".⁴²

Five days after the abdication of King Farouk, Mr. Hart, the chief of the Near East Division in the State Department, told the Israeli ambassador in Washington that "The Department had been encouraged by the orderly way in which this whole coup had developed".⁴³ In a survey of American public opinion, the majority of editorials and banner headlines considered General Mohamed Naguib as following "the example of Turkey's Kemal Ataturk, rather than that of Iran's Mossadegh", and many of the comments emphasised the "US official attitudes toward Naguib will have an important influence on his orientation toward the West".⁴⁴

The American administration was, on the whole, favourably impressed by the developments in Egypt. Moreover, Acheson in his press conference on 3 September 1952 mentioned that "There had been some encouraging developments in Egypt".⁴⁵ Furthermore, American support of the new regime in its early days worried the British who dealt with the military leaders, for the latter looked to American support as carte blanche, a means to achieve their radical policies.⁴⁶ Naguib in return tried to woo the West. "He was ready to extend the hand of friendship to the British", but this was in vain at this early stage of the revolution.⁴⁷

42. John Badeau, The American Approach to the Arab World (London 1968), p.100.

43. NA RG Box 4015 774-0077-3152, Department of State, memo. of conversation, Hart, Eban, 31 July 1952.

44. Truman Library, Elsey papers, Box 60. FR periodicals monthly survey of American opinions, Survey No.136, Development of August 1952, pp.55-6.

45. US Department of State Bulletin, No.690, 15 September 1952, p.406, "Development in Egypt".

46. FO.371/9689-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 21 August 1952, No.1252.

47. FO.371/9688-1952, Minute, Egypt, E 0/8/362, 11 September 1952.

In the early days of the revolution, the balance between the British and the Americans turned in favour of the latter in Egypt. Ambassador Caffery mentioned on 28 August 1952 to Acheson that "I regret to state that the British are showing signs of being a little unhappy with the fact that they have practically no relations with the Egyptian military and our relations with them are so cordial".⁴⁸ During the American cabinet meeting on 9 September 1952, Dean Acheson reiterated the same position.⁴⁹ The favoured American position in Egypt under the military regime had reached a peak, and as Caffery said, "It is at its greatest height in recent years".⁵⁰

What is generally agreed upon here is not the Anglo-American competition over Egypt, but the development of American-Egyptian relations in the first era of the military regime. The events led both sides astray. Each party overestimated their ability to manipulate the situation. Thinking they could achieve their goals without paying the price, Washington tried to accomplish a variety of goals, some of which contradicted their relations with the new regime. For example, Washington wanted to show its readiness to support Egyptian national aspirations and at the same time wanted to maintain its historical alliance with Britain. It was keen to keep Arab friendship, but not prepared to take any decisive action against Israel. What is significant here is how the new rulers in Egypt tried to convince the American policy-makers of their primary concerns in Egyptian internal affairs in accordance with American interests and aims.

48. NA RG 59 Box 4105 774-00/8-2852, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 28 August 1952 (secret).

49. Truman Library, Connelly papers, Box 2, notes on cabinet meetings, 9 September 1952.

50. Truman Library, McGhee papers, Box 1, Department of State, Nov-Dec. McGhee papers, Egypt, 19 September 1952, from Caffery to McGhee.

The Military in Power and the USA (The Regency Council and the Wafd)

The military were facing a series of potential problems. One was the constitutional issue. According to Article 51 of the 1923 Egyptian Constitution, the Regency Council could not assume office except after swearing an oath of allegiance before both chambers of parliament.⁵¹ This meant that the Wafd would have to assume its responsibilities as the majority party in the last parliament. It was difficult for the Young Army Officers to compete with the old popular political party. It was likely that had the Wafd party assumed its responsibility and the dissolved parliament been reconvened, it might have led to the decline of the military role in Egypt. The matter of the Regency Council was a warning sign to both the military and to the Americans. Ambassador Caffery did not hesitate to express his fears that "It would however seem inescapable that both houses must be convened before the Council of Regency can take over....A session of the former Wafd party controlled Parliament and this time it might not be in our interest".⁵²

In the early days of the coup, the situation was unpredictable. All the evidence reveals that the balance between the old politicians, especially the Wafd under Nahas and the Young Army Officers was turning in favour of the former. The Americans began to be worried that they were going to face a difficult situation. Getting rid of Farouk did

51. See Hamrushi, *op.cit.*, p.322. See also Refat Wahid, *Fusul min thaurat 23*, (Dar al-Shuruq al-Qahirah 1978), pp.120-5.

52. NA RG 59 774-11/7-2752, from Department of State (Acheson) to American Embassy, Cairo, 30 July 1952. Caffery reiterated the same meaning in his telegram of 29 July 1952. He wrote that, "It would be best for us all round if Wafd did not return to power", NA RG 59 Box 4016 A 774-00/7-2952, 29 July 1952.

not mean abolishing the ancien regime. The corrupt Wafd was still popular.⁵³ Nahas still enjoyed more advantages than Naguib and his colleagues. Nothing could illustrate this better than Acheson's comment on one of Caffery's telegrams to him on 30 July 1952, "Of course, then he [Nahas] would have no competition as prime minister".⁵⁴ This situation prompted the American embassy in Cairo to compare the Wafd and the proposed military government. It found that the "military government could possibly be useful in furthering the concept of a Middle East Command, etc,...but it would be difficult for the Wafd government to present a reasonable position on these issues".⁵⁵

The contradiction between the Wafd and US policy is clear. It became a life-and-death struggle for both sides. Ambassador Caffery watched the situation very carefully and informed the State Department about developments. On the day after Farouk's abdication, Caffery wrote, "I am informed from Cairo legal experts who, at the prime minister's direction are making an intensive study of this constitutional problem in the obvious hope that somehow convocation of Parliament in the near future may not be found necessary".⁵⁶

American fears of the Wafd returning to power at this early stage of the coup led Dean Acheson to express the State Department's view to his representative in Egypt that he should "...make clear to the PRIMIN and indirectly to Naguib our hope that the constitutional problem can be

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- 53. NA RG 59 BOX 4020 774-11/7-2752, from Alexandria to Secretary of State, No.37, 27 July 1952 (secret).
 - 54. NA RG 59 774-11/7-2752 from Acheson to Caffery, 30 July 1952.
 - 55. NA RG 84 Box 229-350 Egypt, July-August 1952, memo. of Alexandria from McClintock, subject, possible development in Egypt, Cairo, 30 July 1952, "The Regency Council, the parties".
 - 56. NA RG 59 Box 4020 774-11/7-2752, from Alexandria to Secretary of State, No.37, 27 July 1952 (secret).

resolved as soon as possible...[and] our concern at the possible return of the Wafd, who are fully implicated in graft and corruption".⁵⁷

The Americans began to encourage the rift between the two sides by stirring up competition between the young, middle-class army officers who belonged to anti-Wafd organisations, and the Wafd Party. On 28 July 1952, the New York Times tried to provoke the anger of the new regime against the "corrupt Wafd" by saying that "...there were no reports of any move against members of the Wafd Party as part of the promised drive against corruption".⁵⁸

The officers received the willing collaboration of leading jurists such as Suleiman Hafez and Dr. Abdel Razek al-Sanhuri, who in their legal opinion afforded the officers a golden opportunity for the destruction of the Wafd and the whole constitutional system. Their legal interpretation that there was no need to convene Parliament,⁵⁹ lent a legal authority to the officers' acts of power. With such backing, it was natural that the army was going to make the most of this powerful position and to assert its authority over Egypt.

The above-mentioned State Council decision was much appreciated by Caffery and the Western political circles.⁶⁰

Many explanations can be given for the American support of the new regime vis-a-vis the Wafd Party. Firstly, the Wafd Party was swayed by its voters and by its previous commitments to them. It has been

57. NA RG 59 774-11/-2752, from Acheson to Caffery, 30 July 1952.

58. The New York Times, 28 July 1952, p.5.

59. Interview with Ibrahim Faraj (Pasha), Cairo, 17 January 1985.

60. FO.371/96878, Egypt and Sudan, from Alexandria to Foreign Office, 27 July 1952, No.131, Mr. Creswell. Also see NA RG 84 Box 234 Folder 361-22, the State Department viewed was that "the convocation of parliament was unnecessary".

said that the Wafd was a prisoner of its own promises and its previous policies. On the other hand, the army officers did not have any such commitments - except their published manifestos. Secondly, the American attitude towards the Wafd Party was consistent with the Anglo-American desire to undermine the Wafd Party and eliminate it from the political arena, especially after its abrogation of the 1936 Treaty.⁶¹ The American position, to some extent, was furthermore a kind of punishment for Wafdist neutrality during the 1951 Korean War. George McGhee, the American Under-Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, hinted in one of his articles written in 1951, that "The events of the Middle East are moving rapidly. The US cannot afford to allow the force of neutralism and anti-Western sentiment to gain any further ground".⁶² Thirdly, it was simple for the US to deal with a small group of officers as opposed to a political party. With a party like the Wafd, its members argued too much for comfort and the debate presented points of view then to be accepted or rejected. Their behaviour and actions would be too difficult to predict. Finally, the existence of the Wafd with its "crushing majority" and popularity would not give the military junta a chance to gain any popular support as long as the Wafd was still active in political life.

Needless to say, American support for the new regime helped it in its first test of power with the Wafd and with the old political establishment. The disbanding of political parties on 17 January 1953 was the result of the events at the Regency Council, which spelt the

61. FO.371/96918-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 6 January 1952.

62. State Department Bulletin, 6 August 1951.

end of the parties' legitimacy. Since the political parties did not defend the constitution, the military junta understood that they could play one political party off against the other. The political parties, especially the Wafd despite its historical legitimacy, had revealed their weakness and ultimate submission to the military regime. These events gave the new regime the chance to declare that the political parties were deemed incapable of ridding themselves of corruption. As a result, they were disbanded.⁶³ It was the United States that assisted the Free Officer junta to become the undisputed power in the country for over twenty years. Later it was rumoured in Egyptian political circles and articulated in some newspapers that "The US advocated a one-party system for Egypt".⁶⁴

This calculated American help can be traced from the initial honeymoon between the new Free Officers regime and the US. In his first evaluation of the new regime, Ambassador Caffery considered the Free Officers to be an amorphous group without any programme, "bound together by common disgust at their superiors...their figure-head leader, the Popular General Mohamed Naguib was not a particularly strong or intelligent leader...nevertheless, the officers seemed friendly to the US".⁶⁵ As predicted, the new regime began to court the US. Naguib and his colleagues emphasised their desire to be particularly "friendly with the US".⁶⁶ Soon after the new regime took over power, the military rulers and the nation faced each other.

63. Hamrush, *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.275; Naguib, *Egypt's Destiny*, p.181.

64. NA RG 59 611-74/8-2753, from Cairo to Department of State, 27 August 1953.

65. NA RG 59 774-00/7-2452, from Caffery to Acheson, 24 July 1952. See also Box 4105 0018-2052, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 20 August 1952.

66. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/8-152 from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.2831, 1 August 1952.

The New Regime and Communism

From the beginning the new regime committed itself to an anti-communist policy. The communists believed that the answer to Egypt's problems was to be found in Moscow, or better still, in Peking.⁶⁷ Which no doubt would conflict with the officers' relations with the United States. Five days after the revolution, Naguib's spokesman pointed out to Western military attaches,

Egypt's military wish to establish an unofficial committee to fight the communist activities and propaganda. The military hope that the committee will consist of representatives of Egypt...and military representatives from the French and US embassies.⁶⁸

In the following meeting between Naguib's spokesman and the representative of the American embassy, the former defined the powers of the American-Egyptian Committee: "The joint Military Committee will have as its main function the planning of internal propaganda to fight communist activities and to swing over to a pro-US position".⁶⁹

Within two weeks the established power began to face serious trouble (12 August 1952). The workers at Kaf el-Dawar demonstrated not against the regime, but against their manager. The military officers viewed the situation as an open challenge to their authority. The riots led to strong government action and two of the workers were hanged. By adopting this brutal policy, the officers asserted by their deeds that they were not influenced by communist ideology. Nothing would illustrate that better than Naguib's statement on 9 September 1952 that "The army

67. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, p.207.

68. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/8-1952, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.2831, 1 August 1952.

69. NA RG 84 Box 229 Folder 350, Egypt, memo. to Ambassador from D. Evans, 11 August 1952.

would crush anyone spreading lies that the army was influenced by communism".⁷⁰ It was a blow to the left at the end of August. Hadeto,* the only communist group to show confidence in the Free Officers, withdrew leftist support from the "people movement".⁷¹

In order to ensure their support for the military's efforts to combat communist activities, the US designated one of its embassy attaches in Cairo to be the liaison officer in the proposed "anti-communist committee" on an unofficial basis. As a result of this development Caffery pointed out to the State Department that "Some progress has already been made in uncovering and arresting communist agents".⁷²

The above co-operation and co-ordination reached a peak. Egyptian authorities did not permit the holding of the "pro-communist congress of the peoples of the Near East"⁷³ in Cairo. It was feared that they might attack US policy in the area. At least two of the RCC members belonged to the communist movement; they were Lieutenant-Colonel Yousef Siddiq and Major Khalid Mohey el-Din. They did not, however, protect the communist movement from attack and suppression.⁷⁴

Ambassador Caffery urged the State Department to ask the Department of Defense to release police equipment and send it to Egypt. It had been ordered in March 1952 after the Cairo riots.⁷⁵ The State Department,

70. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, pp.165-6.

* National Democratic Liberation Movement.

71. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/81-1952, from Cairo to Department of State, (secret), subject, Egypt's new era, the first three weeks, August 1952.

72. NA RG 59 Box 4038 780-0011/8-1952 (top secret), incoming telegram from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.394, 19 August 1952.

73. NA RG 59 air attache cable 199, 19 August 1952 "Rate this information F6".

74. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, p.257.

75. NA RG 59 774-5MSP/9-252, from Deputy Under-Secretary to R. Lovett, Secretary of Defense, 2 September 1952.

in its turn, supported Caffery's request and pointed out to the Defense Department that "It is in the interest of the US that Ali Maher be supported and the internal security of Egypt be strengthened....Efforts by the present Egyptian government to stabilize the situation have been encouraging".⁷⁶ In November 1952, the American embassy in Cairo informed Mohamed Naguib that they were going to send from US government stock one million dollars' worth of military equipment "for special police units".⁷⁷ Such quick American action was precipitated firstly, by the new regime's demonstrated willingness to curtail communist activities, and secondly, because the Americans were assured on various occasions that the new regime did not intend to wage war against Israel, and was prepared to settle the Anglo-Egyptian dispute.

Not only did the new regime rely on American military equipment in order to confront communist activities, they also asked the American embassy in Cairo to furnish them with anti-communist "pamphlets for distribution by the police".⁷⁸ The Egyptian side was anxious to win American support during the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, and sought to do so by appealing to the American policy-makers' obsession with their anti-communist campaigns. The Free Officer regime, in other words, began to show its ability to handle the situation in accordance with American aims and interests.

76. Ibid.

77. NA RG 59 Box 4107 774-00(w) 11-2952, 29 November 1952, from USARMA, Cairo to Department.

78. NA RG 59 Box 4108 774-001/9-553, from Cairo to Department, September 1953.

The American ambassador began to make his influence felt upon the new regime vis-a-vis the threat of communism. He also reported to Dean Acheson that "the Egyptian authorities have not released fourteen hard-core communists because I asked them not to do so".⁷⁹ Ahmad Hamrush in his Qissat Thourat 23 Yulio about the Egyptian revolution of 1952, sheds light upon indirect American interference against communist activities in Egypt after the revolution.⁸⁰

The American anti-communist impact affected Abd el-Nasser himself. When a special military tribunal was established in July 1953 under the chairmanship of a high-ranking officer to try people accused of communist activities, Nasser told the American ambassador that "This represents a beginning of an operation to get all active communists firmly behind bars".⁸¹ The new regime regarded communist activities as a criminal offence, and it often showed a skilful use of its power. A few incidents illustrate how the military regime tried to prove that it was anti-communist. Before getting rid of the leftist Lt.-Col. Yousuf Siddiq, Abdil Monim Amin told the representative of the American embassy that the Military High Committee "had decided to drop Siddiq because of his anti-Western attitude and because he considered 'point IV' as American colonialism".⁸²

During the first two years the regime conducted an active anti-communist policy. It depended on US information to discover areas of

79. NA RG 84 Box 320, Folder 350, Egypt, November-December 1952, from Cairo to Secretary, 18 November 1952.

80. Hamrush, Vol.1, pp.290-3.

81. NA RG 59 Box 4018 774-00/117-953, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 9 July 1953.

82. NA RG 59 774-00/112-2952, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 29 December 1952.

communist activity in the country, especially in the Egyptian media. Wagih Abaza, the former intelligence officer who was in charge of public guidance in the Egyptian army after the revolution, "asked whether the embassy could supply him with a list of communists on al-Goumhurya's staff, which was the semi-official daily newspaper".⁸³ The new regime also depended on American expertise in organising the Egyptian intelligence service, which had been modelled after the American CIA and staffed by Free Officers.⁸⁴ Heikal in Cairo Documents says that "...the US increased the number of diplomats at the embassy; some of them belonged to the CIA".⁸⁵

It was during the first two years of the military regime that American and Egyptian co-operation and co-ordination against communism reached its zenith. Thus, Jean and Simone Lacouture commented that, "The regime was unpopular with the politically-minded masses from Kafr el-Dawar August 1952, to the trip to Bandung in April 1955; public opinion was sure that there were close connections between the military dictatorship and the Americans. This was not altogether wrong, and the connections dated from the very first minute of life of the new regime".⁸⁶

The US appreciated the officers' new trend in solving the country's internal problems.⁸⁷ Needless to say, the suppression of political parties

83. NA RG 59 Box 40388 from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, 2 May 1954. Wagih Abaza was a member of a secret group of the officers formed in 1939. Wagih and his colleagues were "dazzled and impressed by Nazi organization and propaganda", see P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation.

84. Miles Copeland, The Game of Nations, p.97. Also see Hamrush, Vol.4. Citation from Ibrahim Baghdadi, p.12, and Abdel Monim el-Nagear. Interview with Abdal Fatah A. Abu el-Fadl, Deputy Director of the Egyptian Intelligence Office, London.

85. Heikal, Cairo Documents, p.47.

86. Lacouture, op.cit., pp.214-5.

87. Harry Howard, "The development of US policy in the Near East during 1954", part 1, Department of State Bulletin, February 1955, p.260.

especially the Wafd and the communist organisations which were considered political agitators, gave the military regime a free hand in handling Egyptian foreign policy with minimum interference. According to Ali Maher, from the early hours of the coup, the military expressed their desire to control the internal security department as this would enable them to have a firm grip on internal matters.⁸⁸

Whether the above was a tactical manoeuvre by the military regime or not, the new regime had proved its goodwill towards the West, especially towards the United States, and the US achieved part of its policy and ambitions through the new regime. The elimination of communist influence under the new regime was significant. The communist movement had been crushed by "the people's movement".

Agrarian Reform

In their struggle for power with the old political parties and the communists, the Free Officers promulgated the Agrarian Reform Law on 9 September 1952.⁸⁹ Large estates accounting for over one million feddans owned by 2,000 people disappeared, thereby reducing slightly the degree of inequality in land ownership.⁹⁰ Al-Maraghi, the former Minister of the Interior in his published memoirs states that "before the coup there was a gentleman's agreement between the Free Officers and the CIA to achieve a land reform in Egypt".⁹¹

88. FO 371, from Alexandria to Foreign Office, 27 July 1952, from Crossoul.

89. Baghdadhi, op.cit., Vol.1, p.67.

90. P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation, p.205.

91. Al-Maraghi, op.cit., pp.202-3.

The story of land reform has been told several times.⁹² What is significant is the American contribution behind the Free Officers' early promulgation of the Agrarian Reform Laws in September 1952. By the end of the 1940s and in the early 1950s, the US government gave considerable attention to the idea of land reform, especially in Third World countries. In September 1951, the United Nations Economic and Social Council in Geneva approved a resolution essentially in the form proposed and fought for by the US, endorsing land reform as a "means of raising the standard of living in the underdeveloped countries".⁹³

The inner circles in the Truman administration were not reluctant in their local seminar to emphasise the importance of land reform as a means to combat communist ideology, especially since the end of the Second World War. Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State, supported the idea of land reform and used the occasion of the Wisconsin seminar to point out that "It means security of tenure, improvement of working conditions...establishment of co-operatives, increase of yields, and so on".⁹⁴

Coming back to Egypt, the Truman administration had, before the coup, begun to show some concern regarding the internal situation. In April 1951, one of the American experts in land reform suggested that "...the most important contribution can be made in facilitating the increase of cultivable land. We should, of course, hedge such assistance with providing an equitable distribution of the new, so that the landless

92. See Mariëi, Sayyid Ahmed, Awraq Siyyasia; P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation; Nutting, Nasser; Mohamed Udah, Meillad Thourat 23 Yulia, p.110; Lacouture, op.cit.

93. Truman Library, papers of George Elsy, Box No.60, Foreign Relations, land reform, 12 September 1951.

94. Truman Library, papers of George Elsy, Box No.60, memo. of conversation 23 August 1951; public statement of US land reform policy, copies to Elsy, administration assistant to the president.

peasants and very small landholders would benefit from it".⁹⁵ Moreover, in December 1951 the US submitted to the International Agency Committee on Land Reform in the NEA countries, specific papers dealing with "The US policy towards land reform in Egypt".⁹⁶

The American interest grew even stronger in bringing about land reform in Egypt. We must bear in mind the fact that it was difficult for the Egyptian ruling class to initiate an agrarian reform programme which would undermine their personal status and power. Meanwhile, the Americans approached the reformist elements, such as Moustafa Marei, to submit a land reform bill to Parliament.⁹⁷ One month before the coup, in their ministerial talks Eden and Acheson discussed the idea of land reform in Egypt, on the grounds that the redistribution of the land would "divert the public attention from the Anglo-Egyptian dispute".⁹⁸ All indications showed that agrarian reform had become inevitable. Even Mourtada al-Maraghi the Egyptian Minister of the Interior (1952), mentioned to the British ambassador that the redistribution of land was essential to ease the internal situation.⁹⁹

The military coup was a turning point in the social reform programme. The revolutionary elements represented the spearhead of the urban lower middle class in its conflict with the more traditional landowning and upper middle class. Hamrush wrote that none of the former was a son of a pasha nor had in his family more than fifty feddans. They were from

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- 95. NA RG 59 Box 5375 874-16/4-2541, from Swayzee E/C, Mr. Haulsley, NEA land reform in Egypt, 24 April 1951.
 - 96. NA RG 84, Box 237/500 Mutual security programme, to Mr. Lewis Jones from S.P. Dorsey, 14 December 1951.
 - 97. Hamrush, Vol.4, p.458.
 - 98. Truman Library, Acheson papers, memo.of conversation, 4 July 1952, Box 6; ministerial talks in London 23 June 1952: present UK Eden, Oliver Franks, Ambassador Stevanson, US Secretary Acheson.
 - 99. FO 371/96875, 1952, JE/018-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 18 May 1952.

the middle class, and some from the lower strata of this class.¹⁰⁰ Needless to say, the social background of the officers was a primary factor behind their social reform policy. Social reform, moreover, was consistent with American interests and also with the officers' images. There were no contradictions between these two positions, since both were trying to achieve the same end.

According to the Foreign Office papers, "The State Department was already putting forward ideas on the question of land reform".¹⁰¹ Ambassador Caffery, in one of his first meetings with General Naguib and his military colleagues, stressed in his conversation with them that they must begin land reform.¹⁰² On 20 August 1952, he reiterated the same position in his meeting with Ali Maher and General Naguib, pointing out to them that "Agricultural reform is not only overdue, it is essential".¹⁰³ Caffery was worried that the new regime was going to lose its reputation as a dynamic group with a reformist and progressive outlook. He therefore strongly opposed Ali Maher's inclination to postpone the declaration of the Agrarian Reform Act, on the grounds that "...it will be a mistake to postpone it very much. It will be better to come out with something that sounds dramatic at an early date".¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Caffery tried very hard to keep the American contribution behind the Agrarian Reform Act out of the limelight. He asked the State Department that "...there can be no suggestion of a joint

100. Hamrush, Vol.1, pp.212-5.

101. FO.371/96945-1952, Foreign Office, confidential, 5 September 1952.

102. FO.371/96889, JE 325, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 20 August 1952, No.1246, Sir Stevenson.

103. NA RG 84 Box 242, 502 Egypt 1952, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 20 August 1952.

104. NA RG 84 Box 242, 502 Egypt 1952, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 21 August 1952.

announcement of Charter. The Department will be quick to realise that nothing could jeopardize the TCA [the Technical Co-operation Agreement] in Egypt or elsewhere in the Middle East more than if land reform [is] linked with Point Four, especially [should] publicity backfire".¹⁰⁵

It is clear then that the US government used its economic and technical aid to the new regime as a means of pressing for the initiation of agrarian reform as quickly as possible. The American embassy understood that the discovery of these connections would affect the new regime's prestige vis-a-vis its adversaries and would implicate the American government in Egyptian internal affairs which no doubt would affect the officers' popularity and prestige. Nevertheless, the American embassy observed the daily development of agrarian reform, and as Caffery wrote, "The American embassy is kept closely informed as to what is going on".¹⁰⁶

Three weeks after the military took over, they approached the Americans with a request for advice and assistance on the question of agrarian reform.¹⁰⁷ Because of the officers' request, Ambassador Caffery designated one of the embassy officials to be their consultant on land reform.¹⁰⁸ Another example of American concern in this respect was its nomination of an agricultural expert, Paul Morris, who had been stationed in Iran where "he advised on the distribution of the Shah's land".¹⁰⁹

105. NA RG 59 Box 5375 874/16-18-2052, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 20 August 1952.

106. NA RG 59 847/618-2552, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 25 August 1952.

107. FO 371/96880-1952, 324 from Cairo to Foreign Office, 19 August 1952.

108. NA RG 59 Box 5367 874.00 TA/8-1352, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 14 August 1952. Also see NA RG 85 Box 242 502 Egypt from Cairo to Secretary of State, sent to Dept. 345, 13 August 1952.

109. NA RG 59 Box 5398 880.00/8-2052, office memo. to NE Hart, 20 August.

A semi-official joint committee was established by the Government of Egypt, the representatives of the TCA and the American embassy in Cairo. The Egyptian minister of finance, Emary, conferred daily with the Americans to put the final touches to the Agrarian Reform Act.¹¹⁰ Yet when the rift between the Free Officers and Ali Maher became more apparent over the issue of land reform, on 19 August 1952 the State Department informed its representative in Cairo that "The Government of the US will give encouragement and assistance to land reform".¹¹¹ From the American point of view, agrarian reform would "lessen the causes of agrarian unrest and political instability".¹¹² The Americans began to place their weight behind the military rulers to achieve land reform, and Caffery asked the Secretary of State to emphasise in his public statement the importance of military rule in Egypt. Little wonder then, that Ali Maher, the civilian prime minister, complained to the British ambassador that, "...the frequent contacts between the US embassy and the military junta are being interpreted by the latter as meaning that they have US support for all their ideas and activities".¹¹³

The White House staff in their monthly survey of American public opinion, emphasised to President Truman that agrarian reform "is a golden opportunity for the US".¹¹⁴ Encouraged by these developments, Acheson persuaded President Truman to make a favourable statement about the Naguib regime.¹¹⁵ Despite British reservations, such a declaration

110. NA RG 59 from Dorsey to Hart, 29 August 1952, subject, Economic report for week ending 26 August 1952.

111. P.J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and his Generation*, pp.130-1.

112. NA RG 59 Box 5367 874.00 TA/8-1352, from Department of State to American Embassy in Cairo, 19 August 1952.

113. FO.371/96880-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 27 August 1952.

114. Truman Library, Elsey papers, Box No.60, foreign relations, Survey No.136, Developments of August 1952, p.4.

115. Truman Library, Acheson papers, August 1952, Box No.67A, meetings with the President, Item 2, Egypt, 8 September 1952.

hinting at future American aid was made on 3 September,¹¹⁶ and was favourably received in Cairo.¹¹⁷

It is clear that the American contribution was a primary factor behind the early declaration of the Agrarian Reform Act. Early American support gave the military junta political credit vis-a-vis the civilian elements, especially in the eyes of the prime minister, Ali Maher, who was a man of the old political world and one who belonged to the rich landowning bourgeoisie. Professor P.J. Vatikiotis writes that, "He and his colleagues stood to lose a great deal as a result of the Agrarian Reform Law, whereas the soldiers did not".¹¹⁸

Various reasons can be given for the American interest in agrarian reform. One was the determination to put an end to the influence of the old political parties, especially among the rural population. Another was to combat communist propaganda among the lower and middle classes. A third reason was to establish firmly the new regime's popularity with the Egyptian masses. A fourth and final reason was the assumption that the Land Reform Act and other social reforms would strengthen the position of the new regime regarding the professional politicians and the political parties. Consequently, there would be few complications for the military regime if it was to conclude a political treaty with the West.

On 7 September, the Free Officers rid themselves of Ali Maher, the last shadow of the former regime. Two days later, on 9 September,

116. FO.371/96880-1952, 347-2618-1952.

117. NA RG 59 611-74/9-1952, from Cairo to Department of State, 7 September 1952, press reaction to statement by Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, of 3 September.

118. P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation (London: Croom Helm 1978), p.131.

they declared the Land Reform Act. These two political moves by the officers neutralised the old political powers, and without doubt contributed to the RCC's inevitable march to power.¹¹⁹

Naguib's Cabinet

Throughout the month of August relations between Ali Maher and the RCC continued to worsen. The prime minister and the military committee were opposed in every respect. From the very beginning, the Americans allied themselves with the military elements against Ali Maher and his civilian colleagues. The American embassy moved rapidly to strengthen the officers' prestige and status; therefore, Ambassador Caffery suggested to Washington that "more prominent mention should be given to the prime minister's military colleagues".¹²⁰ Despite British reservations and Ali Maher's complaints, the Americans did not conceal their wide support for the soldiers.¹²¹ Thus it became clear that they were taking sides. The military junta appreciated American support, and as Caffery said, "It was even more than they hoped for this early".¹²²

In order to get rid of Ali Maher, Zakeria Mohey el-Din and Abdil Monim Amin informed the representative of the American embassy that "they look forward to the closest co-operation for mutual advantage between the USA and Egypt".¹²³ After forty-seven days, Ali Maher

119. P.J. Vatikiotis, *ibid.*, p.132.

120. NA RG 84 Box 229, Folder 350, July-August from Cairo to Secretary of State, 19 August 1952. Also see FO.371/96886-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 21 August 1952. Stevenson shed light upon the American attitude towards Ali Maher and the civilian elements.

121. FO.371/96880-1952, No.347, from Prime Minister, Minute dated 26 August 1952, the comment of the Africa Department.

122. NA RG 59 Box 4075-774-00/9-552, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.560, 5 September 1952.

123. *Ibid.*

resigned. This early resignation reflected a significant shift in the military's path towards power. On the following day, the State Department commented that, "We were interested more in principle than personalities...and there is no change in the attitude of the Government of the US".¹²⁴

However, other problems had to be resolved. The military junta chose Dr. Sanhuri to be Ali Maher's successor.¹²⁵ The American embassy moved rapidly to thwart this attempt. Ambassador Caffery warned them that the choice of Sanhuri as prime minister "would produce a deplorable impression in the US owing to his having been a signatory of the Peace Campaign Manifesto".¹²⁶ According to the CIA reports, Dr. Sanhuri opposed foreign cultural penetration. This attitude brought him into conflict with certain American missionary educators: "They regarded his every move, however earnest and apparently sincere as strongly coloured by Moslem cultural traditions".¹²⁷ Needless to say, Caffery's interference in Egyptian internal affairs and his effort to exclude Sanhuri as Ali Maher's successor reflected America's new position in Egypt, the balance between British and American influence, shifting in favour of the latter. All the evidence shows that American influence in Egypt under the new regime had increased. A few hours after Caffery's warning was received, the Officers' choice of General Naguib to be prime minister was a turning point in the history of Egypt.

124. NA RG 59, 611-74/9-1752, from Cairo to Department of State, 17 September 1952.

125. Hamrush, *Quissat thwrat* 23, Vol.1, pp.238-9.

126. NA RG Box 4015, 774-00/9-652, No.581, 6 September, from Cairo to Secretary of State, secret; FO.371/96996-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 9 September 1952; Interview with Ahmad Hamrush, 18 January 1985.

127. NA R/A: O/R Report No.443, 18 June 1947, "Biographic Reports on the Egyptian Delegation".

By taking such action, there was no longer any doubt as to who the exclusive rulers of Egypt would be.

The American embassy was the first to be informed of this decision, even though the key officers of the Egyptian army were kept in the dark regarding Naguib's nomination.¹²⁸ All evidence indicated that the military junta was then keen to gain American support at any expense. On 7 September and before announcing the new cabinet's programme publicly, the Free Officers submitted the outline of the cabinet's domestic programme to the American embassy with the statement that, "The cabinet will carry out this programme and all members of the cabinet will have agreed to every specific point prior to acceptance of their portfolios".¹²⁹ The programme showed the Officers' eagerness to attack corruption and social injustice. In view of its interests, such a programme was attractive to the US.

Events further encouraged American expectations, because the Officers had no experience in political and economic matters, and also had no popular support. Thus, according to intelligence reports, "They may seek the advice of our representatives more than before".¹³⁰ Ambassador Caffery became more influential than previously.¹³¹ The Americans created the impression that they would back the new regime, "Whatever it does". From the British point of view, the Americans would do that as long as the new regime "does not introduce suspected communists into the government".¹³² Following Caffery's advice, the

128. NA RG 59 774-00/9-752, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 7 September, top secret; interview with Abd el-Moneim Amin.

129. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/9-752, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.596, 7 September 1952.

130. NA RG 319/091 Egypt, memo. the Chief of Staff, subject, the resignation of PM Ali Maher, 8 September 1952, secret.

131. FO.371/96881-1952, JE 372, Foreign Office to Stevenson, Cairo, 11 September 1952.

132. Ibid.

State Department urged the British to make a favourable statement on Naguib's cabinet, which they did.¹³³ This statement was favourably received in Cairo.¹³⁴

After the formation of Naguib's cabinet, the military rulers and the nation came face to face, and the duplication of the RCC and the government was somewhat reduced. The revolution was about to pass through a transitional period. The military elements began to feel more confident, and American support had encouraged them to believe that they could act without restraint.¹³⁵ The American policy-makers considered the revolutionary elements as a dynamic group with a reformist outlook which did not conflict with Western interests.

Henry Byroade, the American Assistant Secretary for the Near East area, explained to the British the main reasons behind strong US support for Naguib's government. Byroade pointed out to the British that because of the deterioration of their own position in Egypt, it was essential that the US "should do everything possible to maintain the good position which it had with the Egyptian military to achieve the Western common strategy", and also "to keep the new regime from excess in the execution of its programme".¹³⁶ The American policy-makers showed the British that Egypt was no longer in their sphere of influence. They seized every opportunity to demonstrate their new position in Egypt, which they believed gave them a mandate to handle the Egyptian question on behalf of the Western nations.

133. FO.371/96896-1952, from Washington to Foreign Office, 8 September 1952, No.1714.

134. Egyptian Gazette of 12 September 1952.

135. FO.371/96882-406-1952, FO Minute, Mr. Allen, 25 September 1952.

136. FO.371-96986-1952, from Washington to Foreign Office, 10 September 1952, Sri Steel, No.1721.

Everything had been changed. Ali Maher's resignation reflected a significant shift in Egypt's relations with the US and the UK. The Americans accepted and appreciated the army's role in Egypt. But, on the other hand, the British were very cautious and worried since they had linked themselves with the old aristocratic politicians. It was difficult for them to turn the clock back, and Egypt was now being ruled by a group of officers who came from a different social background.

The Americans understood that and began to establish cordial relations with the officers. The officers, in turn, did their best to manipulate this trend in American policy. As Caffery reported, the officers showed their willingness to ally themselves with the US "to the exclusion of the UK. In any event, they recognized their need of a strong friend and we are nominated".¹³⁷ Just three days after becoming prime minister, General Naguib sent a warm message to the American people, stressing the importance of the mutual relationship between the two countries.¹³⁸

The officers did everything possible to woo the USA. Naguib in his first cabinet was keen to present a different type of minister with a reformist and progressive outlook. Examples were men like Faud Galal who became Minister of National Guidance, Dr. Abbas Ammar, who took the portfolio for Social Affairs,¹³⁹ and Farag Tahia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had a good reputation in American circles.¹⁴⁰ But the American embassy in Cairo expressed its dissatisfaction with the presence

137. NA RG 50 Box 4015, 774-00/1-952, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 9 September, secret security information.

138. FO.371/96881-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, Sir Ralph Stevenson, No.83, 10 September 1952.

139. P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics; both of them were members of Pioneers Movement (al ruwwad)

140. FO.371/96896-1952, from Cairo to Foreign Office, 10 September 1952.

of Ahmed Hasan el-Bakoury,¹⁴¹ Fathi Radwan, and Dr. Nur el-Din Tarraf in the Naguib cabinet, because the first was a member of the Muslim Brethren, and the second was an extreme ultra-nationalist, and considered to be a political agitator.¹⁴² The third, Dr. Tarraf, was a founding member of Young Egypt (later the Socialist Party) which called for radical reforms in the struggle against Britain, and he also had a public record of "anti-American pronouncements".¹⁴³ The ruling officers considered the matter seriously and worked hard to allay American fears that the new cabinet would be extremist. Nasser assured the representative of the American embassy that "they were chosen on the basis of a military estimate of their abilities. Also, that the army was keeping a sharp eye on them". Nasser stressed that "Bakury had joined the cabinet despite the objections of the Moslem Brotherhood Supreme Guide, Hudaybi."¹⁴⁴ and the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Farrag, reiterated the same story to the representative of the American embassy, describing "el-Bakoury as a liberal and progressive as I am".¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, General Naguib as prime minister made a commitment to the Americans that the above-mentioned three had "no influence on his overall policy".¹⁴⁶

141. Ahmad el-Bakouri was a member of "Fellah Society" under Ahmad Pasha Husayn, see Ikhbar al-Youm, 9 September 1952. Interview with el-Bakouri, Cairo, January 1985. Bakoury asserted that "he had good relations with the Americans before the revolution".

142. Interview with Fathi Radwan, Cairo; he was a co-founder of "Young Egypt" with Ahmad Husayn in 1933, then left in 1944 to join the (extremist) National Party, whose manifesto was "No negotiations before the British total evacuation", in other words, "The British should withdraw without prior conditions".

143. NA RG 59 Box 4020, 774-/3/9-/052, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.644, 10 September 1952; also interview with Fathi Radwan, op.cit.

144. NA RG 59 Box 4020, 774-/3/9-/052, from Cairo to Secretary, No.646, 10 September 1952.

145. Ibid., No.657, 10 September 1952.

146. Ibid., from Cairo to Secretary, No.664, 10 September 1952.

By this time, the American embassy appeared to be exerting extraordinary influence over Egyptian internal affairs. It is ironic that American interference in Egyptian internal affairs in 1952 was not so different from British involvement in the early 1940s. The British interference was obvious, but American involvement was vague and was from behind the scenes. There were three reasons for the American objection to the inclusion of extremist elements in the Naguib cabinet. Firstly, the Americans were afraid that these elements would have their own impact upon cabinet policy, and that they would influence the cabinet in the wrong direction. Secondly, from the very beginning, the Americans did their utmost to allay British fears that the revolutionary elements were influenced by the extremist aspirations, and they found that their inclusion would have led to the opposite. Thirdly, they had encouraged the regime to maintain a moderate image at any expense. It was unacceptable internationally for the new regime to be seen as extremist from its inception.

In order to strengthen this doctrine and to free military leaders from British suspicion, Henry Byroade, Assistant Secretary of the American State Department, told the British that the Naguib regime was "not extremist, although impatiently reformist and deserved our general encouragement".¹⁴⁷ The Americans policy-makers were trying "to walk on eggs and not break them". After assuming his responsibility as prime minister, Naguib turned first to the United States for help, and his foreign ministers voiced willingness to have the "US patient understanding and aid to make the grade".¹⁴⁸

147. NA RG 59 Box 4020 774-02/9-1952, from Department of State to American Embassy, Cairo, 10 September 1952.

148. Ibid., 774-13/9-10-1952, from Cairo to Secretary, 10 September 1952, Farrag in his conversation with Spark.

The military junta did its best to woo the United States, As expected, Naguib requested American military supplies and economic assistance, offering in exchange "secret written or verbal assurances concerning long-term objectives of movement including Middle East Defence Organization (MEDO) and partnership with the US".¹⁴⁹ Naguib from time to time hinted that the America-Egyptian co-operation "would be intensified...in many ways".¹⁵⁰ According to State Department papers, under the military regime the Egyptian government showed encouraging signs of becoming a pillar of strength in favour of US and Western objectives towards the improvement of US-Saudi Arabian relations. "Co-operative in regard to the Gaza Strip problem...Egypt has publicly recognized the communist menace as the number one external threat to the region...has publicly indicated an absence of aggressive intention towards Israel."¹⁵¹

Each of the two countries believed the other would serve as an instrument for the achievement of its immediate goals. Events belied Egyptian expectations.

At the time it was difficult to obtain American military aid. The Truman administration was caught in a dilemma. It considered British friendship as a top priority. However, at the same time it did not wish to see the new regime collapse.¹⁵² The Egyptians

149. NA RG 59 BOX 4015, 774-00/9-1852, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 18 September 1952; also 774-5MSP/11-152, memo. for the Ambassador from Army Attache, Truman papers, Foreign Affairs File, DE Box 176, telegram Department of State from Cairo to Secretary, 18 September 1952.

150. NA RG 59 774-1319-1-452, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 24 September 1952, press interview with Naguib.

151. NA RG 59 Box 4024, FW 774-5MSP-10-2654, to NEA Byroade, from Hart, 26 October 1954, Egyptian aid.

152. FO.371/96896-1952, from Foreign Office minutes, 6 September 1952; FO.371/96933-1952, from British Embassy, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 17 November 1952.

overestimated their ability to manipulate their cordial relationship with the United States. They did not fully understand that neither the Secretary of State nor the President could sustain a definite policy towards Egypt.¹⁵³ The Truman administration was handicapped, because it was being replaced by the newly-elected Eisenhower administration.

Economic Co-operation

Nevertheless, there was one area in which American-Egyptian relations advanced during this early period, and that was the area of economic co-operation. Soon after the new regime took power, the American government showed its willingness to expand its economic and technical aid to Egypt.¹⁵⁴ Ambassador Caffery reported to the State Department that American economic assistance "would be a dramatic and popular gesture and would reach every element of the Egyptian populace whose support Naguib so badly needed".¹⁵⁵ The American government had a free hand to handle its economic assistance to Egypt. There was no British objection or reservation regarding American economic policy towards Egypt.¹⁵⁶

The nature of this assistance was defined in a series of agreements based on the May 1951, Point Four, Technical Co-operation Agreement.¹⁵⁷

153. Interview with Mustafa Amin, London 23 May 1983. See Badeau, "US and UAR: Crisis in Confidence", Foreign Relations, Vol.43, January 1962, p.292.

154. NA RG 59 Box 5367 874-00-TA/8-1952, outgoing telegram Department of State, to American Embassy, Cairo, 15 August 1952.

155. NA RG 59 Box 874-00/11-2752, economics, Department of State, office of the Secretary, memo. for SS, 17 November 1952, subject, Egypt: Eden-Acheson conversation.

156. NA RG 59 Box 5368 874-00 TA/12/1752, memo. of conversation, Economic Assistance to Egypt, 17 December 1952, participants: NEA Defense, secret.

157. Middle Eastern Affairs, "Chronology", 21 February-20 March 1953.

The American decision was based on a careful study of Egypt's economic problems and its impact upon the stability of the new regime and "the security of the US".¹⁵⁸ In February 1953, therefore, the American President extended \$10 million worth of financial assistance to Egypt for the purchase of wheat.¹⁵⁹ In return, the Egyptian government appreciated American help, and Naguib stated that "Without US help, Egypt would be in serious economic trouble".¹⁶⁰

The change in the American administration did not affect American policy towards Egypt. The new Republican administration under Eisenhower continued its predecessor's policy towards the new regime.¹⁶¹ On the first anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, Eisenhower wrote to Naguib, "By the events of July 23, 1952, Egypt crossed the threshold to a new era".¹⁶²

From the first day of the revolution, the Egyptian government officially requested from the American government the services of a team of economic and industrial experts.¹⁶³ The American government responded positively on this request. For example, in November 1952 the State Department announced that a group of American experts would assist an Egyptian group in a joint survey to assess the potential for rapid development of Egypt's resources, chiefly industrial.¹⁶⁴

158. NA RG 330 CD 091-3 A to E 1953, confidential, security information, the White House to Director for Mutual Security, 6 January 1953.

159. Ibid., 19 February 1953, to Assistant Director for programme, office of Director for Mutual Security.

160. NA RG 59 Box 5368 874-00 TA/3-853, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 18 March 1953.

161. NA RG 59 Box 4023 774-5MSP/2-2753, Secretary of State message to Dr. Fawzi, 14 February 1953; D.D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, Special Ass.Chron.Series, Box No.2, 17 March 1953.

162. US Department of State Bulletin, 10 August 1953, "First Anniversary of Egypt's Liberation Day".

163. NA RG 59 BOX 5367087 400-TA/8-2252, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 22 August 1952.

164. US Department of State Bulletin, 9 February 1953, pp.223-4, "Point Four Mission to Study Egyptian Industry".

In March 1953 a new Point Four programme agreement was reached between Egypt and the United States. This agreement made available technical assistance to the value of \$10 million for reclamation of 80,000 acres of land in Egypt.¹⁶⁵ It had been described "as the most important of its kind so far entered into in the Middle East".¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the experts of the TCA furnished their assistance and experience to the Egyptian government in studying the feasibility of building the Aswan High Dam. American technical contribution had its effect upon the Egyptian economy during that time and simultaneously upon the leaders of the new regime. Thus, Naguib wrote, "With the help of TCA, we can learn to use our water more efficiently. There is a good chance I think of stabilizing the Egyptian economy at a relatively high standard of living within two generations".¹⁶⁷

American support for the new regime was remarkable. It did not confine itself to technical and economic assistance, but extended to crucial political support. The US also played a primary role in reorganising Egyptian governmental institutions. For example, Egyptian ministers sought American advice "to improve the efficiency of their ministers and at the same time to reduce expenditures".¹⁶⁸

Needless to say, the American contribution was a primary factor in helping the military junta to seize power by every means, overt and covert, by the pen and by the gun. The American government supported

165. The Times, 20 March 1953.

166. US Department of State Bulletin, 6 April 1953, p.498.

167. Mohamed Naguib, Egypt's Destiny, pp.168-9.

168. NA RG 59 Box 2848, Egypt 611-7718-2753, from Cairo Department of State, Washington, 27 August 1953.

and approved the abrogation of the 1923 Constitution.¹⁶⁹ It took a similar position towards the abolition of the monarchy and the declaration of the Republic on 23 June 1953.¹⁷⁰

On its part, the Egyptian government tried to show its goodwill towards the US and lent its moral and material support to American aims and interests in Egypt and in the other Arab countries, despite some popular objection and opposition.

Yet the "honeymoon" between the two sides, which flourished from the very beginning, did not last for very long. The cordial relationship between the two sides followed a turbulent course. As one American scholar wrote, "Washington tried to accomplish a variety of goals, some of them contradictory. On the one hand, it wanted to show a willingness to ally with and then offer partnership to the new Arab nationalism, while building a MEDO against Soviet intrusion. On the other hand, Washington wanted to maintain its important alliance with Britain and France and promote a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict", "or achieve an Egyptian-Israeli modus vivendi".¹⁷¹

The American policy-makers were skating on this ice. Each side overestimated its ability to manipulate the other. It was hoped that the honeymoon would last longer, but there were two basic unresolved problems generated by the 1952 revolution which eroded the optimism.

169. NA RG 84 Box 2-F.500 TCA January-June 1953, American Embassy, Cairo, Report of Point Four.

170. NA RG 84, Box 1, Egypt 1953-1955, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, 23 June 1953.

171. Barry Rubin, "America and the Egyptian Revolution 1950-1957", Political Science Quarterly, Vol.97, No.1, Spring 1982.

The first one was the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, which had its adverse effect upon American-Egyptian relations. The second was the continuation of the state of war between Egypt and Israel, which placed the United States in a dilemma. On the one hand, it wished to support the new regime militarily in order to ensure its regional leadership in the area; on the other hand, the special relationship with Israel influenced US decision-making in the wider Middle Eastern area. In the end, as Albert Hourani wrote about great-power policy, "Any action it takes must necessarily be a compromise and sometimes the search for a compromise leads it into a contradiction".¹⁷²

172. Albert Hourani, "The Middle East and the Crisis of 1956", St. Antony Papers, Middle East Affairs (Oxford University Press 1958), p.19.

CHAPTER FOURUNITED STATES AND THE 1954
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT

The story of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations leading up to the 1954 Agreement has been amply recorded in the secondary literature.¹ What is interesting in this context, is the position taken by the Americans in the midst of a dispute between two of its friends, Britain and Egypt, as well as their efforts, both overt and covert, to meet or at least reconcile the demands of the two parties in conflict.

In the view of the British Minister of State, Selwyn Lloyd, the Suez Canal base in 1952 had lost its strategic importance, because as he said, "The advent of the hydrogen bomb had altered the position. The likelihood of large-scale land operations requiring a large base was considerably reduced. Turkey's entry into NATO had made a move forward possible on Turkey's right flank".² He also believed that because of shortages of men and money, it was difficult to maintain the Suez Canal at a standard that would prevent its deterioration indefinitely, and also because of the awkward international repercussions growing out of Egyptian hostility.³

The British military presence in Egypt was based on the treaty of 1936, and its provision for the maintenance of the British military base remained in force until 1956. After that date Great Britain would

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1. Selwyn Lloyd, Suez 1956. A Personal Account (Jonathan Cape 1978); Sir Anthony Eden, Full Circle, Vol.3 (Cassell 1960); John Marlowe, Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800-1956 (Frank Cass 1965); P.J. Vatikiotis, Modern History of Egypt, 3rd edition (John Hopkins Press 1985).
 2. Selwyn Lloyd, op.cit., p.21.
 3. John Marlowe, op.cit.

have had to seek permission from the United Nations to keep its troops in Egypt, and it was doubtful whether such permission would be forthcoming. From the British point of view, therefore, there were cogent reasons for negotiating a reasonable settlement and thus saving face prior to the expiry of the arrangement in 1956.

As for Egypt, the new regime faced considerable difficulties. This regime had to confront the inevitable popular demand for the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute on terms satisfactory to Egyptian national aspirations. But this did not diminish its eagerness to settle the dispute with Britain, and nothing could illustrate this better than Naguib's speech at the Arab League when he stated that "The British were not the enemies of the Arabs".⁴ As for British policy-makers, especially Eden, they viewed the base in Egypt as desirable but no longer absolutely essential to their interests.⁵ What remained was the negotiation of an agreement between the two sides.

A few days later, following the Egyptian revolution, the American representative in London urged the British to begin talks with the new regime.⁶

In this early stage of the revolution and before Dulles' trip to the area in 1953, American policy-makers tried to achieve several goals simultaneously, some of which were contradictory in nature. On the one

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4. FO 371/96933, 1952, the British Legation, Damascus, 3 October 1952, to British Embassy, Cairo.
 5. FO.371/96892 JE, from Eden to Sir Ralph Stevenson, Cairo, 31 October 1952.
 6. FO.371/96933, 1952, confidential, Egypt and the Sudan, JE 1052/400, Foreign Office Minutes,

hand, American policy-makers wanted to demonstrate support of Egyptian national aspirations, while on the other, they were also keen to build a Middle East defence organisation against Soviet penetration of the area and maintain their traditional alliance with Britain.

Washington formulated its policy in accordance with their strategists' recommendations, who "like to see MEDO set up as soon as possible and they believe that for this purpose we need Arab, particularly Egyptian, co-operation".⁷

The State Department after assessing Western strategic needs, pointed out to the British that "The United States Government still believes that Egypt, not Iraq, is the key to this question and that no other Arab state would be willing to consider participation in the Middle East defence organization until the present difficulties between Egypt and the United Kingdom are settled".⁸ The United States concluded, therefore, that the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute was an urgent matter, and thus it resolved to secure the reconciliation of legitimate Egyptian interest with Western strategic requirements for the region.⁹

On 7 September General Naguib was appointed prime minister. His acceptance gave the RCC complete control over both policy and administration. US Assistant Secretary of State Byroade expressed his optimism to President Truman that "There was some indication that the

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7. NA RG 59 FW 774 5MSP/12-2952, to the Secretary from NEA, 30 December 1952, subject, Conversation with General Bradley on Israel and grant arms assistance for Egypt.
 8. NA RG 330 CD 337, New York talks, aide memoires, Department of State, Washington, 5 November 1952.
 9. US Congress Hearings 1957, p.197, Dulles' statement.

group in power might be willing to separate the question of the king's title to the Sudan and the question of the Suez base and the defense of the area".¹⁰

On his second day in office, the Egyptian prime minister, General Naguib, showed the American embassy his readiness to "establish some sort of relations with the British". Ambassador Caffery welcomed the advent of the military rulers¹¹ as an opportunity to break out of the impasse that had troubled Anglo-Egyptian relations for a long time, and policy-makers in the United States tried to exploit the situation in order to achieve their goals, thus in October 1952 the American effort became a "determining factor" behind the British decision to release £5m to Egypt.¹² The British, under American pressure, showed their goodwill towards Egypt by withdrawing their troops from el-Ferdan Bridge which spanned the Canal near Ismalia.¹³ The situation, however, was complicated by a statement by Mr. Antony Head, the British Secretary of State for War, regarding Britain's right to retain the Suez Canal base.¹⁴ This prompted Naguib to attack the Western powers.¹⁵

The military junta was well aware that any compromise would be interpreted by the local opposition forces, such as the Wafd and the Muslim Brethren, as sacrificing important national interests.¹⁶

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- 10. NA RG 59 Box 4037, 78000/8-52, top secret, Department of State, memo. of conversation, meeting with Truman, participants Byroade and Murphy.
 - 11. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/9-1852, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 8 September 1952.
 - 12. NA RG 84 Box 221 Folder 320, Anglo-Egyptian Relations, memo. of conversation, Col. Amin and Mr. McClintock, 11 October 1952; The Times, 10 October 1952.
 - 13. Ibid.
 - 14. FO.371/96977, 1952, JE/1194/89, from FO to Cairo, 1 October 1952.
 - 15. FO.371/96978, 1952, from Cairo to FO, 2 October 1952.
 - 16. Ibid.

Naguib's frustration as a result of his failure to obtain any encouragement from the West - whether military or economic - led him to warn the representative of the American embassy in Cairo that some members of his cabinet were in touch with Russia, "who would offer anything that Egypt wanted in order to take a definite stand against an Anglo-American bloc and MEDO".¹⁷

The Americans were pressing hard on the British to settle their dispute with the new rulers on the grounds that if that regime collapsed the next one would be much worse.¹⁸ In these circumstances Ambassador Caffery did his utmost to influence the British towards a compromise. Caffery informed the State Department that "Egypt will not participate as partner with Britain in any MEDO concept unless British announce acceptance principle of evacuation Canal Zone".¹⁹ The American eagerness for Egypt's participation in an anti-Soviet collective security network pushed its policy-makers to do everything possible to save the junta's reputation as well as that of the British.

At this juncture, the American position in a dispute between two of its friends Britain and Egypt, allowed Washington to act as a mediator, although this carried the danger that both allies might become antagonistic towards the United States. The American task was difficult. United States policy-makers were caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, their global strategic responsibility and British

17. NA RG 84 Box 221, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian relations, from American embassy, London, to Secretary, 25 October 1952.

18. Copland, *op.cit.*, p.72; Department of State Bulletin, 15 November 1952, p.2.

19. NA RG 59 Box 4041-780 5/10 2152, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.1007, 21 October 1952, secret security information.

alliance constituted a major priority; on the other, they did not wish to see the military regime in Egypt collapse. In the meantime, the officers began to realise that the Americans were in a state of confusion. According to the United States counsellor, this made them "extremely depressed".²⁰ The United States government feared that a delay, or renewed deadlock, in the withdrawal negotiations might escalate the tension between the Egyptians and the British, and have a serious effect upon the new regime's position and prestige vis-à-vis strong domestic opposition.

The American embassy in Cairo took steps to ease the tension and to consolidate the junta's position. Ambassador Caffery found it highly important, before discussion the process of the negotiations, that the military junta should send one of their representatives to Britain.²¹ After a meeting with Colonel Abdel Moneim Amin, a member of the military committee, Eden emphasised to his top advisers that "the Egyptian government showed its readiness to co-operate with us and the United States in organising Middle East defence". Colonel Amin was emphatic that evacuation was a prerequisite for any arrangement for such co-operation.²² Caffery in his turn made it clear to the Free Officers that Egyptian participation in the Middle East Defence Organisation was the price for the withdrawal of British troops from the Canal base.²³

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- 20. FO.371/96896, 1952, from Cairo to FO, 9 October, Sir Ralph Stevenson, No.1493.
 - 21. NA RG 4026 774-55/10-2552, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 25 October 1952, top secret, interview with Col. Abdel Moneim Amin, Cairo, Egypt.
 - 22. FO.371/96979-1, 1952, from Secretary of State FO, Eden, to Field-Marshal Viscount Alexander, 7 November 1952.
 - 23. FO.371/96897-1952, from Cairo to FO, 10 October 1952, copy of US memo. handed to High Military Committee on 6 October 1952. NA RG 59-611, 74/11-1052, from Cairo to Secretary of State, "We told Naguib and members of his military committee...US aid so urgently asked for by Naguib cannot be forthcoming in any quantity unless we have firm assurance as to Egypt intention. (re MEDO).

As already indicated, the new military regime initially showed its readiness to co-operate with the United Kingdom and the United States in organising Middle East defence.²⁴ But one could already detect a divergence between the Egyptian and the Anglo-American concepts or perceptions of this defence organisation. The junta nevertheless knew that it stood to gain from the key position assigned to Egypt by the West, and especially by the United States who was anxious to see Egypt join its "camp". But the situation was complex. The Egyptian military rulers requested American military supplies and economic aid in return for Egypt's participation in MEDO.²⁵ The State Department expressed its goodwill, when Under-Secretary of State, Henry Byroade, pointed out to the Defence Secretary that "...the important contribution which an offer of United States military aid to Egypt would make to the satisfactory conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations".²⁶

Events, however, belied Egyptian expectations. In October the Egyptians were asked to submit a list of their military needs to the American military attaché in Cairo. In November the United States sent William Foster, the Under-Secretary of Defence to Egypt. He gave the Egyptian leaders a false impression that the United States was planning to supply Egypt with its military demands. Egypt was invited

24. FO.371/96892, 1952, from Cairo to FO, 19 September 1952. FO.371/96934, 1952, conversation between Secretary of State and the Egyptian Ambassador, from Eden to Stevenson, 22 December 1952. Truman Library, McGhee papers, Department of State, memo. of conversations 1952, June-October. From Ankara to State Department, 29 October 1952; Middle Eastern Affairs, chronology November-December 1952, 10 December 1952.

25. FO.371/16892 1024-2 from Cairo FO, 19 September 1952.

26. NA RG 59 611-74/11-1052 to Robert Lovett, Secretary of Defence, from Byroade, 14 November 1952, subject, US contribution to Anglo-Egyptian settlement.

to send a military mission to the United States to follow up its request.²⁷ The Egyptian government sent Ali Sabri and al-Naklawi to Washington. The American embassy in Cairo was, as Caffery wrote, "not to divulge the nature of the Egyptian mission to his British colleagues".²⁸ On the spot Caffery saw the immediate danger. Naguib and his officers in Caffery's opinion were "putting themselves very much in our hands by sending two of their best men to Washington".²⁹ Caffery did not hesitate to point out to the State Department and the Defence Department the positive and negative impact of Ali Sabri's mission upon the whole situation. He commented that "I trust Department of Defence and Department authorities will realize how difficult the situation will become here should these officers return empty-handed. Conversely, if they are given encouragement in Washington our hand will be immensely strengthened here in negotiating defense and MEDO probably with Naguib".³⁰

The State Department was impaled on the horns of a dilemma. Caffery's recommendation went unheeded because London warned Washington that American aid to Egypt might defeat the British position.³¹ Furthermore, the Jewish lobby pressed the Truman administration not to furnish Egypt with arms prior to a peace settlement with Israel.³²

27. Interview with Abedl Monein Amin, Cairo, and with Ali Sabri, Cairo, 6 February 1986.

28. NA RG 774-5 MSP/12-1752, from Cairo to Secretary, No.1456, 17 Dec.1952.

29. NA RG 59 774-5 MSP/12-1652, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.1448, 16 December 1952.

30. Ibid.

31. NA RG 59 Box 4027 774 56/12-352, Cairo to Secretary, 3 December 1952; FO.371/96896-23, 1952, FO to Washington, 30 December 1952.

32. FO.371/96896 23, 1952, Washington to FO, 30 September 1952; interview with Abdel Moneim Amin, Cairo, January 1985.

Washington's hesitation disappointed the military junta, and it became clear to them that Caffery's sweet words and William Foster's prompt acceptance of Egypt's arms requirements did not reflect the real intentions of the American administration.

The Egyptian failure to settle its dispute with the British and its failure to obtain American military assistance, frustrated Nasser and his colleagues. In an interview with the New York Herald Tribune, Nasser stated that "the leaders of the Revolution will withdraw from the government to lead the people in war against the British....It will be a guerilla war".³³ Naguib reiterated the same position as did Anwar el-Sadat³⁴ and Salah Salem.³⁵ Caffery informed the State Department that "the fact is British have already completely destroyed Egyptian confidence in them".³⁶ During the months of December 1952, January and February 1953, Caffery pointed out to the State Department that "any delay in furnishing aid to Egypt would result that Egyptians will surely lose their present perhaps exaggerated faith in us".³⁷ Simultaneously he warned that the deterioration of the American position in Egypt would result in "No Anglo-Egyptian settlement and no MEDO".³⁸ While Anglo-Egyptian negotiations dragged on, Caffery indicated to the State Department that "It is absolutely essential that Egyptians not be rushed on MEDO and that the evacuation be publicly portrayed as

33. FO.371/96934, 1952, from Cairo to FO, 30 December 1952, cited in al-Akhabar, Cairo 29 December 1952, and The Times, 31 December 1952.

34. NA RG 59 Box 4017 774-00(W) 12 1952, 19 December 1952, from Usarma, Cairo, to Washington.

35. The Times, 5 February 1953.

36. NA RG 59 Box 4026 774-56/1-2353, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 23 January 1953.

37. NA RG 59 Box 4026 774-56/1-2253, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 22 January 1953.

38. Ibid.

unconditional".³⁹ In his recommendation Caffery left the door open. He did not exclude the possibility of Egyptian co-operation with the West once a settlement had been reached. But it was clear that the American was orientated towards the Egyptian formula rather than the British one. He supported the evacuation as a prerequisite for any Egyptian co-operation.

A different explanation could be given for Caffery's new attitude. Caffery received many intelligence reports which claimed that if the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations should break down, the new regime would probably seek to cover "the failure of its foreign policy by assuming anti-Western attitude". Furthermore, these reports assumed that if the military regime were faced with internal dissension, increased₂ opposition and the possible threat of being taken over, the government would probably seek arms and increased trade from the Soviet bloc, and renewal of guerrilla warfare against the British garrisons would be undertaken.⁴⁰ Caffery realised that the danger of war was not remote. Time was running out for the Truman administration and its status to some extent forced it to be a mere passive spectator as regards the Anglo-Egyptian dispute waiting for the newly-elected Eisenhower Republican administration to manipulate the Egyptian military demands and to satisfy British strategic needs in the Suez base.⁴¹ Nothing could describe the situation better than these words by the American

39. NA RG 59 774 5/1-853 LWC from Cairo to Secretary of State, 22 January 1953.

40. NA RG 59 Box 4016 774.00/4-153, Cairo to the Secretary, summary of national intelligence estimate 76, 25 March 1953, probable developments in Egypt.

41. FO.371/96942, 1952, from Washington to FO, 12 December 1952.

Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, when he said that "January and our last week in office came with no one in satisfactory shape for secret talks to begin...and....There was no more progress in 1952 in breaking the Anglo-Egyptian impasse than there had been in 1951...the Conservatives being no improvement over Labour. Our successors were to prove no more productive than we had been".⁴² Nevertheless, the United States' role as mediator, orchestrated by Caffery and the State Department, became a source of great annoyance to British policy-makers, who maintained that the United States and especially its representative in Egypt were trying to undermine Britain's negotiating position in favour of Egypt.

Sudan

The failure by the US at this stage to accommodate British military needs and Egypt's political demands over the Suez Canal did not discourage it from exploiting other matters where Britain and Egypt were in agreement, like the future status of the Sudan.

Sudan was an explosive issue throughout the course of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations beginning in 1946. The military junta rejected the slogan of the "ancien regime" of "Evacuation and the unity of the Nile Valley". In order to further the negotiations, the military junta decided to drop Egypt's demand for unification with the Sudan in favour of Sudanese self-determination.⁴³ Furthermore, they abandoned the ancien regime's tactics which had linked the Sudan issue with the defence question.

42. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (W.W. Norton:New York 1969),pp.727-8.

43. The Times, 27 October 1952, "Talks on Sudan Concession".

The Western press appreciated the Egyptian attitude; The Times under its banner headline commented that "What seems to have happened is that Egypt has offered the Sudan all the British offered and more".⁴⁴

Several reasons could be given for the officer's Sudanese initiative. According to John Marlowe, General Naguib and his colleagues had the good sense to realise that Egypt's principal and indeed vital interest in the Sudan was the question of access to the Nile water. Access was more likely to be secured through a friendly independent Sudan than through a hostile one.⁴⁵ A second explanation and the most significant was Caffery's role behind the scenes where he began to exploit the officers' willingness to compromise on the Sudan. In October 1952 he pressed them "to enter into informal contact with representatives of the British Embassy".⁴⁶

When the negotiations were resumed in October 1952, it seemed that a resolution on Anglo-Egyptian differences was in sight. Nevertheless the Americans could foresee that Britain's political tactics in the negotiations would hamper its success. Therefore on 29 November, and even before the negotiations had broken down, the State Department pointed out to the British Foreign Office that "We are certain that if this opportunity for agreement is to slip out of hand we shall not soon have another opportunity to settle the Sudan problem and open a way to an agreement with Egypt on other matters".⁴⁷ However, the American

44. Ibid.

45. John Marlowe, Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800-1956, pp.392-3.

46. NA RG 84, Box 231 Folder 350-52, Sudan, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 1 October 1952.

47. NA RG 84, ibid., from Secretary of State to London (3645), 29 November 1952, to Cairo No.1211.

advice went unheeded. Consequently the situation was enormously complicated between the British and Egyptians.

Therefore, the United States policy-makers then decided to adopt tough diplomacy vis-à-vis British political manoeuvres. Dean Acheson pointed out to them that "...if Sudan negotiations break down and defense negotiations cannot be undertaken, US must fully reserve its freedom of action with respect to Egypt".⁴⁸

To resolve the impasse, and to avoid further deterioration of the Anglo-Egyptian situation, in February 1953 Ambassador Caffery pressured the Egyptians to accept a final British proposal on the Sudan, and they eventually did accept it.⁴⁹ The Americans had imposed their influence upon the two parties which led to a resumption of the negotiations. Soon afterwards an agreement was reached on the Sudan. One of the two major stumbling blocks troubling Anglo-Egyptian relations was removed after nearly a quarter century of heated debate.⁵⁰ Naguib recognised Caffery's role in the affairs and praised him for "bringing closer the two viewpoints". In Naguib's view the agreement "opened a new page in Egypt's relations with Great Britain and the United States".⁵¹

The Free Officers' pragmatism in handling the Sudan issue led them to indulge in false hopes, thinking that the Sudan accord might break the impasse that had troubled their relations with Britain in general and

48. NA RG 59, Box 3588, 745 W-00/1-1353, from the Department of State to American Embassy, London, Acheson, 3 January 1953.

49. NA RG 59 774-5/2/1853, from Cairo to Secretary No.1890, 19 February 1953; Documents on International Affairs, 1952 (London: OUP 1954), pp.315-324 for "The Sudan Agreement Text"; Naguib, Egypt, pp.242-3.

50. The Times, 13 February 1953. Also see, State Department Bulletin, Arthur Z. Gardiner, "Problems of Trade with the Middle East", 23 March 1953, pp.432-3.

51. Naguib, Egypt, p.244.

the United States in particular. However, Anglo-Egyptian relations remained deadlocked. This impasse in Egypt's relations with the West was further reinforced by Britain's virtual power of veto over the shipment of arms to Egypt. In view of the continuing British embargo and in light of the United States desire not to undermine a Cold War ally, the lack of progress on economic and military aid to Egypt was almost certain.

There were numerous indications that the above political tactics frustrated Nasser and forced him to attack the United States openly for the first time, considering it a supporter of "imperialistic powers".⁵² The American representative in Cairo saw the danger, and several intelligence reports claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood might resort to guerrilla warfare against the British garrison in the Suez Canal base. In order to remove any doubt on the Sudanese score and to ease the tension, Ambassador Caffery did not hesitate to interfere when he told Fawzi that "This was an ideal time for Egyptians to keep their mouths shut". In return, Fawzi as a highly-motivated diplomat, promised to "take steps including instruction to censors to put an end to all discussion on evacuation subject".⁵⁴ Nasser reiterated the same position,⁵⁵ as did Salah Salem.⁵⁶ In order to prevent further deterioration in the Anglo-Egyptian situation, American embassy representatives approached

52. The Times, 3 March 1953 ("No co-operation with Britain, Nasser. Col. Nasser on 70 years of humiliations").

53. NA RG 84 Box 221 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian relations, December 1952, 12 December 1952, from Cairo to Secretary of State.

54. NA RG 59 774-5/2 1853, from Cairo to Secretary No.1890, 19 February 1953.

55. NA RG 84 Box 248 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, 20 March 1953, from Cairo to Secretary, event. Department No.2114.

56. NA RG 59 Box 4023 774-5/2 1952, from Cairo to Secretary No.1892, 19 February 1953.

two prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood, telling them that "It would be unfortunate in the extreme if irresponsible elements should intervene and cast away all chances of these achievements being realised".⁵⁷

The American policy-makers understood that because of the deterioration of the Anglo-Egyptian situation the balance between the moderate and the extremist elements might turn in favour of the latter. It was obvious to them that the military regime needed to consolidate its power at home. In this context, Nasser showed his goodwill towards the West, and made it clear that the new regime was "anti-communist".⁵⁸ In order to break the impasse, Nasser demonstrated his readiness to give a secret verbal assurance that "Base facilities will be at disposal of the West in case of war which threatens the Middle East".⁵⁹ As a response, the United States government signed an economic agreement with the Egyptian government offering the latter \$10m to finance its technical projects,⁶⁰ such as hydro-electric plants and land reclamation. In this way, despite the continued friction between Egypt and Britain, American-Egyptian relations did not deteriorate, and the honeymoon between the two countries was extended. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the Eisenhower administration began to take a "new look" at the Middle East shortly after his inauguration in January 1953.⁶¹

57. NA RG 84 Box 221, Folder 320-1, memo. of conversation 18 December 1952.

58. RG 59 774-5 MSP/2-1453, from Caffery to Byroade, 14 February 1953, discussion between Nasser and Lakeland.

59. NA RG 59 Box 4014 780-5/3 1853, from Cairo to Secretary of State No.2092, 18 March 1953.

60. The Times, 20 March 1953 ("United States aid for Egypt").

61. Department of State Bulletin, 9 February 1953, pp.213-4, Dulles, "A survey of our foreign policy problems".

Eisenhower Administration and the Dispute

The new American administration was particularly concerned by the marked decline in Western and, with it American, prestige in the Middle East. The region as a whole also appeared to constitute a major gap in the Western defence system.⁶² The Eisenhower administration began to frame a new American strategy towards the Middle East, in which Egypt "is obviously the key" in the defence issue.⁶³ The American National Security Council reported in March 1953 confirming this, and further recommended that "[the US]...should develop Egypt as "a point of strength".⁶⁴ Such American assessments were unrealistic, not taking into account the fact that the absence of a sound Anglo-Egyptian settlement was undermining American initiatives in the area. On 16 March 1953 Eisenhower placed on Britain a great part of the blame for America's failures in the Middle East, Britain in his view "had handled the Egyptian issue badly".⁶⁵

By early April 1953 the Eisenhower administration was in a quandary. On the one hand it wanted to show its willingness to support Egyptian national aspirations, while building a Middle East regional defence system against the Soviet threat. On the other hand, Washington wished to maintain its important alliance with Britain and other colonial powers.

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- 62. Dulles statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 25 May 1953; Steven L. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict, p.60; Campbell, Defence of the Middle East, p.49.
 - 63. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers (Ann Whitman File 1), Dulles Herter series Box No.1, April 1953, memo. from Eisenhower to Acting Secretary of State, 23 April 1953.
 - 64. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers (Ann Whitman file), NSC papers, summaries of discussions, special meeting of NSC, 31 March 1953, p.14.
 - 65. D.D. Eisenhower Library, papers of J.F. Dulles, telephone call series Box No.10, folder White House, telephone conversation 16 March 1953, memo. of conversation with the President.

The administration therefore could hardly acquiesce to the British position in Egypt without sacrificing its principles against colonialism, and without jeopardising its efforts to promote close relations with Egypt.

During that time the CIA and the American embassy in Cairo compiled many reports about the deterioration of Anglo-Egyptian relations, which they believed could lead to a resumption of violence.⁶⁶ Thus, on 9 March 1953, The Times wrote on its front page that "Egypt opens army camps for citizens".⁶⁷

Despite the fundamental problems which marred Anglo-Egyptian relations, both sides entertained hopes of making quick progress towards a settlement. But the United States was the only country with enough political clout in Egypt at that time. Churchill himself recognised the American position by asking Washington to designate a military man of higher rank to engage in the Anglo-Egyptian defence discussions and to assist Caffery.⁶⁸ After many preliminary contacts, Eisenhower chose General J. Hull, the Deputy Chief of Staff, to represent the American side in the projected Anglo-Egyptian defence talks.⁶⁹ Simultaneously Eisenhower pointed out to Naguib and Eden that the United States could not come into the negotiations unless

66. NA RG 59 774-00/653, Weekly Summary, events of Egypt, 31 December-January 1953, 6 January 1953. Ibid., 780-5/3-1153, from Cairo to Secretary of State No.2030, 11 March 1953. Ibid., 59 774/5-25/5323, Summary of Intelligence Estimate 76, 25 March 1953, probable Development in Egypt.

67. The Times, 9 March 1953.

68. D.D. Eisenhower Library papers (Ann Whitman file). NSC Series Box No.4, Folder 133, meeting of NSC, 24 February 1953; NA RG 59 Box 4023, 774/5-2553, from Department of State outgoing telegram to Cairo, 25 February 1953.

69. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers Box No.8, Folder 4, Egypt, 11 March 1953.

invited by the Egyptian government,⁷⁰ providing the venue for American unwillingness to be placed in a "no-win" situation.

Shortly thereafter, the Egyptian did not hesitate to reject the American offer to participate in the negotiations.⁷¹ This is demonstrated well by Nasser's words to Caffery that the military junta "wishes to avoid having the United States placed in a position to share public hostility now directed against the British".⁷² But Mohammed Naguib tried very hard to exploit the Egyptian rejection to enhance the nationalist image of the regime in Egypt by attacking publicly the initial American offer, declaring that "...we have enough with one... I will not accept any interference whatever with the independence of this country".⁷³ Secretly Naguib and Mahmoud Fawzi told Caffery that "You can accomplish more in your behind-the-scene role than you could have accomplished as an active negotiator".⁷⁴ It is not so much that the military junta excluded the possibility of an American participation in their negotiations with the British, but rather that they feared that the American overt role at this stage of the talks, especially after the Sudanese agreement, would be interpreted by the opposition as American interference in Egyptian political affairs.⁷⁵ It might also

70. Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.150-3. D.D. Eisenhower papers, Int.series Box No.8, sent to American Embassy, Cairo, from the President to General Naguib, 24 March 1953; D.D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers 51-59 J. Foster Dulles, chronological series Box No.1, 17 March 1953, 16 March 1953, memo. of conversation.

71. M. Naguib, *Kalimati Li, L. Tarikh*, pp.132-33; RG 59 Africa 50-54, Egypt 28 45-611-74/4 353, aide memoire, Secret Security Information, 24 March 1953; *The Times*, 12 May 1953.

72. NA RG Box 248, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, January, March, from Cairo to Secretary, 18 March 1953.

73. *The Times*, 12 May 1953, and 19 March 1953, "Cairo Policy on Canal Zone Evacuation".

74. NA RG 59 Box 4023, 774-5/3-1553, from Cairo to Secretary of State No.2064, 15 March 1953.

75. NA RG 84, Box 248 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, 18 March 1953, from Cairo to Secretary, sent department 2097.

confirm Soviet rumours that the military regime would open the way to Egyptian participation in a Middle East defence organisation, something that had been rejected by its Wafdist predecessors. Similarly, the military junta's eagerness to court the United States and to encourage negotiations was reflected in Nasser's statement to Lakeland that "Naguib will give secret verbal assurance that base facilities will be at disposal of the West in case of war which threatens the Middle East",⁷⁶ and his readiness to discuss the possibilities of an Egyptian-Israeli peace, after the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute.⁷⁷

But nevertheless the American position as a whole was far from clear to Egypt. Mohamed Heikal, Nasser's trusted adviser, and the pro-American political commentator, raised an obvious question with the Eisenhower administration in one of his articles published on 8 April 1953, "Tell us frankly and clearly where you stand".⁷⁸ Events moved rapidly and the American policy-makers perceived the danger. Therefore, by the end of March and the beginning of April the American administration encouraged Churchill to begin negotiations with Neguib as soon as possible.⁷⁹ The Egyptians demonstrated their readiness to start talks with the British, although they were not hopeful of a successful outcome.⁸⁰

76. NA RG 84 Box 248, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, 28 March 1953.

77. NARG 50 Box 4023 774-5/3 from Cairo to Secretary of State No.2141, 26 March, top secret.

78. Akhir Li za (weekly magazine, Cairo) 8 April 1953, cited in translation in the State Department File RG 59-611 74/4 11/53, from Cairo to Department, 4 November 1953.

79. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers as President (Ann Whitman file), Dulles Herter series Box No.1, folder, Dulles, April 1953, Personal and Secret, 7 April 1953, Dulles to Churchill.

80. NA RG 59 774-5/4-953, from Cairo to Secretary of State, No.22/6, 9 April 1953.

The degree of moderation was a new trend in the Egyptian camp. This moderation was in evidence when, on 11 April, Nasser made a statement reported in The Observer, "You ask what is our policy - it is complete independence. But we also want the Canal Zone base to function efficiently....We know that we will want technicians: since it is British equipment in the base we will need British technicians".⁸¹ The American embassy and the British authorities welcomed Nasser's statement, considering it most helpful and encouraging.⁸² In their frequent meetings with the representatives of the American embassy, Nasser and Salah Salem did not exclude the possibility of Egypt participating in regional defence arrangements with the United States and Britain, once a settlement had been reached.⁸³ The military regime's moderation and its willingness to compromise can be attributed to its need for American military aid. This was required in order to ensure the military's loyalty to the regime, and to consolidate its power against domestic opposition.

The American government used its support as a trump card to manipulate the Egyptian authorities. By the end of March 1953 the United States declared Egypt eligible for military grants, but this was "limited to training only".⁸⁴ Clearly this declaration did not satisfy all of the Egyptian military requirements as it was qualified

81. The Observer, 12 April 1953.

82. NA RG 84 Box 248, Folder A 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian Relations, April-June 1953, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 13 April 1953.

83. NA RG 59 Box 404, 780-5/3-553 from Cairo to Secretary of State, 5 March 1953; RG 84 Box 248 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, from Cairo to Secretary, 10 April 1953.

84. NA RG 330 DC 092, Greece-Italy 1953, Box No.8, Assistant Secretary of Defense, 6 April 1953.

by a restrictive limitation. It was perceived by the Egyptian government as a stepping-stone which might be followed by requests for more supplies. It certainly did not exclude the possibility of future aid once a settlement had been approved by both sides.

Actually, the American inducement was a primary factor behind the Egyptian decision to resume talks with the British. In order to avoid any setback in the negotiations and to encourage a positive outcome, Caffery advised Nasser and his colleagues not to insist upon complete evacuation at this early stage of the negotiations. He felt that "the British will not agree to such a demand".⁸⁵

Needless to say, American efforts enabled the negotiations to resume on 28 April. The participants met six times and once again the process reached a stalemate. According to Naguib and Baghdadi, Great Britain took the position that Egypt must first agree to some sort of military alliance before it could safely evacuate the Suez Canal Zone. The Revolutionary Command Council insisted that independence was a fundamental prerequisite to any formal alliance with the West. The government of an occupied country was no more able to negotiate a treaty of alliance with the occupying power.⁸⁶

In any event, the military officers kept their options open by refusing the British formula, and at the same time approaching "the American President with an offer to co-operate with Washington in a

85. NA RG 84, Box 248 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, 20 April 1953, from Cairo to Secretary.

86. Mohamed Naguib, Egypt Destiny, p.251: Baghdadi, op.cit., p.75.

Middle East defense pact".⁸⁷ Even though flexibility and pragmatism characterised Egyptian diplomacy, Nasser however pointed out to one of the American embassy officials that "The base must be an Egyptian base, under Egyptian control. We are willing for the British to leave their staff in our custody and we are willing to accept their technicians...control over technicians must be in our hands".⁸⁸ The Americans soon realised their plan for a Middle East defence system was becoming unattainable. Dulles decided to investigate the situation personally, and travelled to the Middle East. The Americans believed the British position was deteriorating rapidly, and State Department briefing papers complained that "Colonial and imperialistic policies are millstones around our neck".⁸⁹

Dulles' Trip to the Middle East

Four days prior to Dulles' trip to the Middle East, the Arab foreign ministers, after their meeting on 6 May 1953, declared their support for the Egyptian cause and called on Britain to withdraw its troops from Egypt without any preconditions.⁹⁰ At around the same time, Naguib gave an uncompromising speech in the style of his Wafdist predecessors. He declared that "Independence cannot be granted by a piece of paper. It can be achieved only by sacrifice and blood".

87. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers Int.series, Box No.8, Egypt/memo. of conversation, the President and the Egyptian Ambassador, 4 May 1953.

88. NA RG 84 Box 248, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, April-June 1953, from Cairo to Secretary, dated 6 May 1953.

89. Ibid.

90. New York Times, 10 May 1953; The Times, 11 May 1953, "Arab League's Policy, Support for Egypt".

It appears that the support given by the Arab League provided Egypt with an opportunity to harden its position. And this was done primarily in order to impress upon Dulles the urgency of the situation, and persuade the United States to exert pressure on the British to be more flexible. According to this hypothesis, Egypt believed that the support given by the Arab League for their cause might spur the United States to lend its backing to an Arab collective security pact in which Egyptian hegemony would be assured. This way American support would also afford Egypt the opportunity to extend its influence within the Arab region.

Four days before his arrival in Cairo, Dulles received a personal message from the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, requesting the United States to delay providing Egypt with any military assistance.⁹¹ Dulles considered this British request as part of a policy intended to handicap the American defence plans for the region and to weaken Dulles' position at the bargaining table with the Egyptians. Thus the Eisenhower administration warned Churchill of what it could expect should Egypt's military demands remain unfulfilled, and that the American position was that "We feel that it may not be possible to continue these dilutory tactics without serious consequences in our relations with Egypt and charges of bad faith".⁹² On the eve of Dulles' visit to Egypt, therefore, the situation was indeed complicated, especially when Naguib declared that bargaining over the Canal Zone was "Shameful".⁹³

91. RG 59 11.011/DU 5/-853, sent to American Embassy, Cairo, from Department of State, 8 May 1953.

92. Ibid., verbal text to Churchill.

93. The Times, 11 May 1953.

Three major issues occupied the attention of Secretary Dulles prior to his departure to Cairo on 11 May 1953: the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute.⁹⁴ Egyptian participation in an anti-Soviet collective security network, and persuading Egypt to become the first Arab state to conclude a peace agreement with Israel.

On 11 May 1953 Mahmoud Abul Fath, a leading Egyptian journalist, and editor of the al-Misri newspaper, published an open letter to Secretary Dulles stating that "If America wants security in the Middle East...let her leave the Arab people to organise their own defence and let her supply them with the arms". He added that "Dulles has not come here to hear our ideas but to force us to accept a solution" agreed upon by both the American and British governments.⁹⁵ In al-Akhbar, published by the Amin brothers, Moustafa Amin asserted that Egypt could hardly be expected at this time to concern itself with communism, "which is a probable threat, while the British occupation is an actual danger and an act of aggression".⁹⁶ Al-Dawa, of the Muslim Brotherhood took a hard line in criticising the Dulles mission. An editorial stated that "The emissary of the dollar will not listen to the voice of tortured humanity. The only force which push the idea of bargaining out of the mind of Dulles is our own steadfastness".⁹⁷

94. NA RG 59 Box 2848 611-8016-1253, from American Embassy, Ankara, 12 June 1953, memo. of conversation between McGhee and Turkish Foreign Minister; RG 59 File 6 110-11/DU/5-453, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 4 May 1953.

95. Al-Misri, 11 May 1953.

96. Al-Khabar, 11 May 1953.

97. Al-Dawa, 11 May 1953.

It was in these circumstances that Dulles began his talks with the Egyptians. He held one meeting with Naguib and another with Nasser. According to Mohamed Heikal and the American papers, three main topics were discussed: the British occupation, the need for armaments, and the Western proposals for a Middle East defence organisation. During the Naguib-Dulles talks, the former reiterated his point several times that "no government in any Arab country can now go against the will of the people who hate the British and feel bitter against the United States". At the end of his statement, Naguib asked Dulles rhetorically to "Free us from the British occupation first, and we can then negotiate in good faith".⁹⁸ But Naguib tried to keep the door open for a possible military alliance. He told Dulles that "No country can stand alone", and expressed the view that "Russia is not our friend". In short, Naguib did not exclude the possibility of Egyptian participation in a Middle East defence network once the British had evacuated. At the end of their talks Naguib indicated to Dulles that their failure to reach an agreement with the British would adversely affect his government's position and perhaps another "revolution would take place with incalculable results".⁹⁹ In his meeting with Dulles on 12 May 1953, Nasser reiterated Naguib's position. Furthermore, he pointed out to Dulles that "the Egyptian people think of MEDO as a perpetuation of occupation".¹⁰⁰

98. NA RG 59 Box 4037-78-0015 2953, Dulles' trip to the Near East, Secretary of State, memo. of conversation between Dulles and Mohamed Naguib, 5 pm, 11 May 1953, p.5.

99. Dulles-Naguib conversation, *op.cit.*

100. RG 59 Box 4037, Dulles' trip to Near East, mem. of conversation between RCC and Dulles, 12 May 1953; Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, pp.43-5.

It is clear that the issue on which agreement was sought and the goals which Dulles set out to achieve had an important bearing on his chances of success. Unfortunately, events did not develop as expected. Because of Egypt's resentment, Secretary Dulles did not hesitate from the very beginning to tell Naguib that he felt that the original MEDO proposal no longer met the situation and was outdated; and he thought something else could be initiated. The exclusion of the MEDO issue from the discussion led Dulles to point out to Naguib that the "United States cannot equip Egypt to fight the British".¹⁰¹ In his talks with Naguib, Dulles and his aides focused on the Anglo-Egyptian dispute in the hope that a settlement of the controversy would strengthen their position in the Arab world and undermine the possibility of Soviet penetration in the region. American policy was aimed at more limited goals which presumably were less difficult to achieve. Thus Dulles emphasised to Egyptian military leaders that "efficiency" is the key word in thinking of the base,¹⁰² and confirmed that it was very important to the United States that "the change in the status of the base should not affect its usability in war or on short notice". He added, "No one could afford to have a power vacuum in the Base". At his meeting with Fawzi and Naguib, Dulles reiterated the American position with respect to the technical maintenance of the Suez base. He stated that the base should be maintained at a high level of efficiency.¹⁰³ But at the conclusion of his visit to Egypt, Dulles did his utmost to

101. Ibid., 11 May 1953, p.14, Secret Security Information.

102. Memo. of conversation between Dulles and Naguib, ibid., p.13.

103. Ibid., p.9.

correct the Egyptian impression that "the United States is blindly and fully supporting the British policy in Egypt".¹⁰⁴ Thus the controversy with America's ally did not cool America-Egyptian relations at this time. In order to prove their goodwill in their efforts to reach a satisfactory settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, the officers in their turn guaranteed that they would take no drastic measures against the British until Dulles returned to the United States, when he would have an opportunity to review the situation.¹⁰⁵

The failure of Dulles to secure Egyptian participation in a Western Middle East defence organisation did not affect the American hope that Egypt might become the first Arab state to make peace with Israel. Egyptian military leaders, for their part, overestimated their ability to play off the United States against Britain. Each actor was keen to manipulate his "opponent" thinking that events might lead to the achievement of its aims without paying a high price. Dulles' trip nevertheless gave him the opportunity to reassess the American position and role in the dispute between Britain and Egypt.

At the end of May 1953 Secretary Dulles returned from his mission. He submitted an extensive secret report to the American president explaining the Anglo-Egyptian dispute and his personal analysis of it. He recommended that "the United States must convince the British to relax their position". He concluded that "the days when the Middle East used to relax under the presence of British protection are gone",

104. NA RG 59 Box 4016 774.00/5-1953, Weekly Summary of Events, Egypt, 13 May 1953; also interview with Ali Sabri.

105. NA RG 59 Box 4016 774.00/5-1953, Weekly Summary of Events, Egypt, 13-19 May 1953.

and "such British troops as are left in the area are more a factor of instability rather than stability".¹⁰⁶

X Dulles' assessment of the situation can be attributed primarily to intelligence reports which confirmed that the Anglo-Egyptian hostility provided "a real test of Arab solidarity". The reports raised an obvious question, "Will the Arab League declare an economic blockade against Britain?" How many volunteers would come from the Arab world to fight beside their Egyptian brothers against the British troops?¹⁰⁷ It was also strengthened by other reports compiled during Dulles' stay in Cairo, many of them suggesting that the deterioration of Anglo-Egyptian relations would lead to a military confrontation between the two sides.¹⁰⁸ Any British military action against Egypt would constitute a threat to pro-Western regimes in the region and thereby increase the likelihood of Soviet penetration in the Arab world. It was well known that any British military interference would put an end to American attempts to conclude peace between the Arab states and Israel.

On a broader front, after his return to the United States, Dulles attempted to resolve the problems which prevented the realisation of a Middle East defence system. His approach was two-fold: to facilitate an agreement which would end the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, and to resolve

106. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles papers, Box 73, Near East Trip, Important point by Dulles, pp.1-2. See also McGhee papers, Box No.1, Department of State, from American Embassy, Ankara, to Department of State, Washington, 28 May 1953, subject: Secretary visit to Ankara.

107. RG 84 Port Said, Egypt, 1950-54, confidential file 1953, Box No.1, from American Consulate, Port Said, 16 May 1953 to American Embassy, Cairo, to State Department, and see also, Eisenhower papers (Ann Whiteman file) Dulles Herter series, Box No.1, folder Dulles May 1953, for the President from the Secretary, 18 May 1953, Secret Security Information.

108. Executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VI, 83, Congress, Second Session, Statement of Secretary Dulles, 1954, p.688.

the Arab-Israeli controversy, or at least reach a modus vivendi. But the idea of establishing a defence system centred on Egypt was temporarily shelved, pending a solution of these other problems. Dulles now perceived the success of the Middle East defence organisation as a remote possibility. Many of the Arab peoples "are more fearful of Zionism than communism", and they were so engulfed with their quarrels with Great Britain and France that they paid little heed to the Soviet threat.¹⁰⁹ His assessment of the Middle East defence organisation and Egypt's role can be attributed to a number of factors. According to Dulles' top secret file, the "Suez Canal base was not important".¹¹⁰ It became evident to American and British strategists that the defence of the Middle Eastern countries called for several bases in the northern tier. Moreover, the existence of nuclear weapons emphasised the need for a military dispersal all the more imperatively. Therefore it was necessary to build up the northern tier. A new approach to the Suez Canal base dispute became possible.

In the meantime, there had been no visible upgrading of contacts between the British and the Egyptians since the break-down of negotiations in May. Neither side was able to articulate its intentions and reactions, nor to share in common objectives. Following Dulles' mission, the Egyptians renewed their efforts to resume negotiations with the British. On 26 May 1953 Nasser told the Australian Minister in

109. Department of State Bulletin, 15 June 1953, Report on the Near East, p.833; also Dulles papers, Important points of trip.

110. NA RG 59, Top Secret File (Washington talks, July 1953), bilateral with the United Kingdom Suez Canal base (11 July 1953), p.9.

Cairo that "It would be foolish for Egypt to attempt to fight the British". Furthermore, he declared that Egypt was prepared to accept British technicians, "but not interminably".¹¹¹ Naguib reiterated this position to the correspondent of the London Daily Herald.¹¹² In order to break the impasse, the Egyptian ambassador in Washington asked the State Department to work out some suggestions of how to resume the discussions with the United Kingdom. Flexibility and pragmatism were evident in the Egyptian offer. In the course of Ahmed Husayn's conversation with the American Under-Secretary, General Bedell Smith, the former showed Egypt's readiness to accept a small number of British technicians "for a short period", once the British had pulled out their troops from the Canal base.¹¹³ On the one hand, the Egyptian proposal sought to eliminate some specific obstacles, and on the other, the Egyptian regime tried to maintain extensive links with the United States in order to use them as a trump card against the British in case of difficulty. The Egyptian concern to have the United States involved in the dispute led General Mohamed Naguib to declare in an interview with Damascus Radio on 12 June, that he "had no objection to United States intercession in the Canal dispute".¹¹⁴

111. NA RG 59 Box 2978 674-0015-2753 H, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 27 May 1953.

112. NA RG 84 Box 11, Egypt 1953-1955, Folder 350, Egypt, from American Embassy to Department of State, 12 June 1953.

113. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/5-553, memo. of conversation, Ahmed Hussein and Under-Secretary Smith, 5 June 1953.

114. NA RG 59 Box 2978 674-00/6-253, 12 June, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State.

American Efforts to Break the Impasse after Dulles' Trip

The Americans now increased their efforts to break the impasse. In a top secret message of 17 June 1953, Eisenhower asked his representative in London to inform Churchill that "We believe best interest of all will be served if British-Egyptian discussions are resumed in Cairo". He added that "We felt the agreement with Egypt alone was more practicable than broader agreement on MEDO".¹¹⁵ Although the Egyptians and the British resumed their informal talks,¹¹⁶ Churchill's reply to Eisenhower on 17 June did not encourage the Republican administration to take active steps "in asking the Egyptians to reopen the discussions" formally.¹¹⁷ Instead, the Americans hardened their position regarding Egyptian demands, and informed the Egyptian representative in Washington that the United States Government, because of strategic military reasons, considered the "Base should be available to Western powers in case of general war anywhere in the world". Several considerations brought about a reversal in the American attitude towards the availability of the Canal base.¹¹⁸ One of these

115. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers as President (Ann Whitman file), Dulles-Herter series, Box No.1, Dulles folder, 23 June 1953, from Dulles to American Ambassador, London, 17 June 1953, top secret.

116. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, p.206.

117. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.1, Folder Dulles, June 1953, memo. for the President, subject, Egypt, 20 June 1953.

118. NARG 84 Box 248, Folder 320-1, memo. of conversation, Mr. el-Labban, Egyptian Embassy. NE Mr. Hart, 18 June 1953. During Dulles-Naguib talks, the Egyptian understood that "the base would be available to the Arab states and to allies of the Arab states in case of an attack on Arab states was considered imminent by the United States".

was the collapse of American policy in Iran¹¹⁹ which pushed the United States closer to the United Kingdom's position regarding growing national demands in the Middle East. American policy-makers realised that they had to abandon, or at least shift their soft diplomacy in the area as it might jeopardise the Anglo-American alliance in the Cold War era and encourage Soviet penetration.

Another major consideration was that talks concerning the reactivation of the base in the case of a global war appeared to be a suitable vehicle for a continuation of the dialogue with the Egyptians. This might influence Egypt to accept the British position to include Turkey and Iran in the "reactivation" clause.¹²⁰

The American proposal regarding the availability of the Suez base in case of general war posed special problems for American-Egyptian relations. The Counsellor of the Egyptian Foreign Office protested to the American embassy in Cairo by declaring that "News from Washington has caused great concern in Cairo". Furthermore, he told the American chargé d'affaires that "you seem to want more from us now than before".¹²¹ Salah Salem, the member of the RCC and Minister of National Guidance, hinted in his speeches to the notion that the Indian-style neutralism would be a feasible foreign policy for Egypt.¹²²

119. Barry Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions, pp.80-1; Kermit Roosevelt, Counter Coup (McGraw 1979).

120. For the British point of view, see Anthony Nutting, Nasser, pp.68-9, and Anthony Eden, Full Circle, p.255.

121. NA RG 84 Anglo-Egyptian Relations, from American Embassy, Cairo (Lewis Jones) to Parker Hart, State Department, 6 July 1953.

122. Ibid., and The Times, 6 July 1953.

The American embassy interpreted Salem's statements as a reaction to their proposal.¹²³ In many ways the American policy-makers understood the dangers accompanying their political tactics. Despite their promises to Dulles, Egyptian military leaders threatened to launch a guerrilla war against the British in the Canal Zone unless the United States came forward with new proposals for settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute.¹²⁴ It seems clear that the Egyptians aimed "to dissociate the United States from the United Kingdom",¹²⁵ and to use American fears of an Egyptian neutralist policy in order to press Britain to arrive at a reasonable settlement. And this would have the added advantage of silencing or neutralising domestic opposition to the military regime. But the search for a solution was an arduous process. Both the Egyptians and the British hardened their positions, while American policy-makers came to believe that the British had lost their credibility in handling the negotiations. It was obvious that the availability, duration of stay, and the status of British technicians were the main obstacles in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations delaying the Anglo-Egyptian agreement.¹²⁶

On 14 July 1953, the American National Security Council compiled a top secret report for Eisenhower which commented on the adverse effects of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute on American strategy in the area as a whole. A statement from the report concludes that "...it could

123. NA RG 84, from American Embassy, Cairo, to State Dept., 6 July 1953.

124. NA RG 59 674.84 A-/7-653, Paris, Egyptian-Israeli relations, 6 July 1953, American Embassy, Paris, to Department of State.

125. *Ibid.*, this statement has been stated by reliable Egyptian source to the American embassy officer in Paris.

126. Eden, *op.cit.*, p.255.

result in inflammation throughout the Arab states to the point where they would endeavour to exclude Western influence from all of their states". In their final remarks, a member of the NSC indicated that "An early solution of this problem is urgently needed to enable the West to get ahead with plans for the defence of the area".¹²⁷ In the meantime, the Eisenhower administration committed itself further to active involvement in conflict resolution. Shortly after the Dulles-Salisbury talks in Washington, the Americans were willing to concede the British position regarding the availability of the base in a major war,¹²⁸ but they asked the British to modify their position with respect to Egyptian demands, and to make concessions.¹²⁹ The Americans assumed not only a mediating role but also adopted a new one. As a visible "partner", they hoped to break the impasse. On 15 July 1953, Eisenhower promised Naguib that substantial economic and military aid would be forthcoming upon the settlement of the dispute,¹³⁰ in order to persuade Egypt to resume the negotiations with the British. At this time, in return for a treaty to be concluded between the United Kingdom and Libya, Britain was to acquire the right to maintain its military

127. NANSO papers, Report No.155/1, 14 July 1953, pp.19-20.

128. NA RG, top secret file, Washington talks, July 1953, bilateral with the United Kingdom, Suez Canal base, 11-15 July 1953. Dulles-Salisbury NA RG 84, Box 248 F.320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, 21 July 1953, to Secretary from Cairo.

129. Ibid., Anglo-Egyptian, July, memo. of conversation. General Robertson pointed out to Ambassador Caffery that "British feel that as a result of Washington talks the United States is backing them in their controversy with Egypt".

130. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, International series, Box No.8, Folder 2, Egypt, from Eisenhower to Naguib, American Embassy, Cairo, 19 July 1953.

establishment there for twenty years.¹³¹ This development in neighbouring Libya encouraged the hope that talks between Britain and Egypt could be resumed with some chance of success.

In this new phase of active diplomacy the Americans renewed their efforts to resume negotiations. On 17 July, the State Department submitted to Egypt a draft formula that:

1. Recognized the complete sovereignty of Egypt over all its territory, including the Suez Canal.
2. All foreign experts including British and American technicians who might be employed to maintain the Suez Base should be placed under Egyptian command.¹³²

The draft formula was rejected as an unsatisfactory proposal by the RCC members, "who were disappointed"¹³³ because of its inherent ambiguities, the issues of availability and duration had not been approached, and these were considered the most difficult issues in the negotiations.¹³⁴

Egyptian reservations did not, however, prevent the United States from following up its efforts to resolve the dispute. They approached Saudi Arabia, a supporter of the Egyptian government to try and persuade the RCC to be more compromising in their attitude regarding the issue of the availability of the Suez Canal base.¹³⁵

131. The Times, 13 July-18 August 1953, "Anglo-Libyan Treaty".

132. NA RG 59, Box 4016, 774.00/7-1753, 17 July 1953, Hart N.E. to Byroade.

133. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320, Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, from Cairo to Secretary, 11 August 1953.

134. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320-1, from Cairo to Secretary, 26 August 1953.

135. NA RG 59, Box 4038, 780-022/7-2753, memo. of conversation, participants, Saudi Arabian Ambassador, NEA, Byroade, secret, p.2, 27 July 1953.

American Embassy Efforts to Ease Tension

The American embassy in Cairo expressed its concern about opposition groups in Egypt, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, and their effect upon Egyptian political decision-making. The embassy's Political Officer approached the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in order to establish their attitudes towards the possible Anglo-Egyptian agreement.¹³⁶ This overture gave the American embassy the opportunity to reassess its policy towards the deteriorating situation, and also to understand the main factor behind the Egyptian stubbornness with regard to the issues of the availability and duration of the base. At the same time, the United States tried to show its goodwill by promoting further relations with Egypt. In August 1953 the American government recommended that "the removal of the United States Air Force supply base from Abu Sueir", but the British opposed the withdrawal and requested the Americans to delay "at least until the conclusion of the United Kingdom-Egyptian talks".¹³⁷ Once again the Americans were trying a difficult balancing act. On the one hand they wanted to maintain their important alliance with Britain and to demonstrate their solidarity with their ally. On the other, they tried to support local demands for independence and development. This ambivalent attitude made the United States a prime target for Egyptian suspicion that it was

136. NA RG 84, Department no.345, Cairo to Secretary, memo. of conversation, 5 August 1953.

137. NA RG 339 CD 092, Box No.8, Denmark-France, Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense, memo. for USD files. Subject: use of Abu Sueir Air Base, Suez Canal Zone, by USA Air Force, 25 August 1953.

the United States who encouraged Britain to harden its position vis-a-vis the Egyptian demands.¹³⁸

On the spot, Caffery saw the danger, namely that American political ambiguity undermined "the Egyptian confidence in the United States",¹³⁹ and led them to feel that the United States had abandoned its traditional role of supporting national movements and had decided to give the "imperialist powers a free hand in the Middle East and North Africa".¹⁴⁰ Caffery recommended strongly that "the United States should take an increasingly responsible role in the Middle East". Moreover, he suggested that the United States should not be a mere passive spectator, handicapped in its relations with the European "imperialist" powers.¹⁴¹

The recommendations went unheeded as the United States had deferred to Egyptian national demands due to the explosive events in Iran.¹⁴² On several occasions, Egypt repeatedly warned the United States of what it could expect should Egypt's national aspirations remain unfulfilled. Its position would then be the "defense of freedom everywhere and positive neutrality between the East and the West".¹⁴³ This threat of Egyptian neutrality was reflected in the RCC's impatience in the lack of progress in their informal discussions with the British and their allusion to the political manoeuvres by the United States.

138. NA RG 84, Box 246, Folder 320, in pol.relations, 1953, from Cairo to Department of State, 4 September 1953. Also RG 59, 64-74-9-453, from Cairo to Eyes Only, for the Secretary, 4 September 1953.

139. NA RG 59, 611-74/9-453, from Cairo to Secretary, 4 September 1953.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

142. Barry Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions, pp.84-6.

143. NA RG 59, Box 1978, 674-00/9-1953, from Cairo to Department of State, Washington, 19 September 1953, subject, Comment on Egypt's policy in the United Nations.

In these circumstances, the State Department was impelled to renew its efforts to bring about the resumption of negotiations. The American Under-Secretary of State pointed out to the British ambassador that they had the feeling that the "present Egyptian concession on duration given to Caffery very close to all that could be obtained".¹⁴⁴ Caffery considered British stubbornness as the main obstacle in concluding an agreement. Therefore on 6 October, he asked the State Department to urge the British to "modify their attitude"¹⁴⁵ in their talks with the Egyptians. At the same time, in order to strengthen the American position and to prove that the United States would fulfil its military promises to Egypt once the settlement had been reached, Ambassador Caffery suggested to the State Department that "It would be very much in the national interest if we would invite the entire graduating class of the Egyptian National War College".¹⁴⁶

By making this recommendation, Caffery may have been firstly trying to prove to the Egyptian military regime that once the settlement had been reached, the Americans would comply with Egyptian demands for military assistance. He also assumed that secondly, this kind of military mission did not commit the United States to granting Egypt any military equipment, and that thirdly, it would not provoke the British, but without doubt it would modify the Egyptian position at the bargaining table. Finally, such a mission would not affect the military balance between Egypt and Israel.

144. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320-1, from Secretary to Cairo, No.289, 13 September 1953.

145. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, from Cairo to Secretary, 6 October 1953.

146. RG 330 CD 092 Egypt, Box No.8, the Secretary of Defence, subject, Visit of 55 Egyptian officers to this country, 6 September 1953.

Despite all American efforts and the willingness of the British and the Egyptians to settle the dispute, the situation did not improve. In October 1953, two main issues created a new deadlock. One was Britain's requirement that its technicians be allowed to remain in military uniform, which the Egyptians rejected on the grounds that it "would be a symbol [permanence] of foreign occupation".¹⁴⁷ The other was the demand that British control over the Suez Canal base could be reactivated in the event of an attack on Turkey and Iran,¹⁴⁸ or in response to an Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁴⁹ It was clear at the end of October that further negotiations were fruitless. It was difficult for the two sides to compromise. British Conservative Party leaders were under fire from members of their party who alleged that the Churchill government was capitulating to American and Egyptian blackmail.¹⁵⁰ Churchill tried to deny these accusations before the House of Commons by declaring that "The solution will not be dictated either by the violence of our foreign enemies or by the pressure of our best friends".¹⁵¹ In Egypt the military junta itself was under attack from the domestic opposition groups, especially the Wafdists, who accused it of compromising Egyptian national aspirations and bowing to Anglo-American pressure.¹⁵²

147. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, p.206.

148. Eden, op.cit., p.255.

149. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder, Anglo-Egyptian relations, from Secretary to Cairo 529, London 2521, 9 November 1953.

150. Eden, op.cit., pp.256-7; Meyer, op.cit., p.61; The Times, 9 October 1953.

151. New York Times, 18 December 1953.

152. Hamroush, Vol.1, pp.182-3; The Times, 18 October 1953. La Couture, op.cit., p.175. By the middle of September 1953 the revolutionary court began its work by arresting thirty-four politicians and bringing them to trial.

Dulles' Efforts to Break the Impasse

During this time the Americans sought to promote understanding by conciliating between the two sides. On 3 November, Dulles asked the British ambassador in Washington for a "distinctive uniform" for the British military technicians differing from the "conventional military uniform". He also urged the British to exclude from the negotiations "the Arab-Israeli conflict" as a case for reactivating the base.¹⁵³ By such proposals Secretary Dulles was aiming to avoid any further delay in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. Moreover, he hoped to keep the Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the Suez base a separate issue from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Also Dulles was trying to allay the Egyptian suspicions that the British would involve this cause as an excuse to keep the base under their control without any restriction.

Behind the scenes at the same time, America combined pressure and inducement to bring Egypt back to the bargaining table. This American tactic was not viewed, in Washington at least, as being inconsistent with attempts to ease the tensions between Egypt and Britain. Intensive efforts were made to stop any Egyptian attempt to negotiate for arms from any European country or from NATO members.¹⁵⁴ The United States did its utmost to prevent such deals either by threatening the

153. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder, Anglo-Egyptian relations, from Secretary to Cairo, 9 November 1953.

154. NA RG Box 4026 774-56/4-1-553, from Athens to Secretary of State No.3076, 15 April 1953; 774-56/42453, from Athens to Secretary of State, 24 April 1953. The Secretary of State pointed out to the American ambassador in Athens that any Egyptian arms deal with European countries might weaken the UK, and also that the US bargaining position vis-à-vis Egypt; see NA RG 59 774-56-4-1553, from Dulles to Athens, No.3267, 19 April 1953.

governments of these countries or by employing various techniques of persuasion.¹⁵⁵ All of these measures were taken with a view to forcing the Egyptians to be more flexible in their negotiations with the British. Egyptian tactics disturbed them since these would help Egypt harden its position at the bargaining table with the British. It was in any case difficult for the Eisenhower administration to remain passive in the face of Egyptian intransigence, which threatened to turn the balance of power between Egypt and Israel in favour of the former, and thus undermine American attempts to achieve peace between Egypt and Israel, or at least a modus vivendi between them.

In addition, the US had repeatedly deferred its economic and military aid to Egypt "until agreement is concluded"¹⁵⁶ between Egypt and the United Kingdom. Caffery continued reporting to the State Department that the RCC suspected that the United States was bowing to British pressure and used "economic assistance to press on Egypt to make Suez agreement on British terms".¹⁵⁷

American hesitation seemed to irritate and frustrate Nasser, who declared before an audience of Cairo University students on 10 November that "We shall rely upon ourselves...without dependence on aid from either the Western or the Eastern bloc".¹⁵⁸ Then on 20 November, Nasser

155. NA RG 59 77456/9-1553, Department of State, to American Embassy, Rome 2726, proposed purchase by Egypt of certain military equipment from Fime Carnical, September 1953. From Madrid to Secretary, No.417-774-56/12-1753. The United States pointed out to Spain "That the latter had no right to supply third parties with any kind of weapons unless the United States military representative might be consulted with regard to their disposition".

156. RG 59 774-5MSP/9-2953 CS/G, to Under-Secretary from NEA Mr. Byroade, subject, current economic and military assistance to Egypt, 29 September 1953; see also D.D. Eisenhower Library, papers of J.F. Dulles, telephone call series, Box No.10, telephone conversation with White House.

157. NA RG 59 Box 5376-874-2H/11-1253, from Cairo to Secretary, 12 November 1953.

158. RG 59 Box 1978 674-00/11-1253, from American Embassy, Cairo, to the Department, 12 November 1953, Nasser warns students of difficulties.

attacked the United States openly, declaring "We must therefore depend on ourselves and we must realise that our enemy will not help us but will always work to weaken us". He added, "America is closely linked with Britain and will not help us to infuriate Britain. Do not believe for a moment that America will help us".¹⁵⁹ While the Egyptian leadership was deeply annoyed with American political tactics, it did not hesitate to place its hopes on the outcome of the Bermuda Anglo-American summit conference which was held in December 1953.

On the eve of the conference the Egyptian ambassador asked Dulles to exert more pressure upon the British to convince them that "an agreement was really necessary".¹⁶⁰ Secretly, Naguib indicated his willingness to co-operate with them "since the British will evacuate".¹⁶¹

In his talks with Eden, Dulles emphasised that there should be a time-limit to withholding American economic aid to Egypt, and that this time "was rapidly expiring".¹⁶² But this approach was unsuccessful since Eden was apprehensive, believing that Dulles was basically trying to weaken the British negotiating position with regard to Egypt.¹⁶³ This interpretation resulted in a tougher British attitude towards granting Egypt any concessions, regardless of all the American attempts to break the impasse.

159. RG 59-774/3/11-2153 LWC, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, 20 November 1953.

160. NA RG 59 Box 4016 774-00/12-153, memo. of conversation, 1 December 1953.

161. NA RG 59 Box 4016 774-00/12-1853, memo. for Mr. Dulles, secret security information, 8 December 1953.

162. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320-1, from Secretary Dulles to Cairo 636, London 3070, for Caffery, 9 December 1953; The Times, 12 December 1953, "Busy week for Mr. Eden".

163. Interview with Ambassador Byroade (in December 1953). Byroade was the Chief of the NEA in the State Department.

Consequently, the outcome of the Bermuda summit conference was seen as unsatisfactory by the military regime in Egypt. An American diplomat met Egyptian sources "in close touch with Nasser", and was told that the RCC would review Egypt's foreign policy. He confirmed in this connection that the "steps currently under consideration" included:

1. Formal declaration of neutrality and withdrawal of the offer to make the Suez base available to the West under any condition.
2. A campaign to persuade other Arab League states to support Egypt.
3. An economic boycott of the United Kingdom.
4. Harassment of British troops in the Canal Zone.¹⁶⁴

Whether or not Nasser conveyed these policy intentions for tactical reasons, that is, as a way of exerting pressure on the Americans to break the impasse, Egyptian antagonism towards the West had increased sharply. At the same time, Ambassador Caffery's reports reflected his fears that British intransigence would lead to the spread of "Mossadegehism" not only among the Egyptian leaders but also among the populace.¹⁶⁵ American policy-makers accepted the view that the military junta was under tremendous pressure from the domestic opposition, and feared that the example in Iran might be followed in Egypt.

164. NA RG 84, Box 248 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, from Cairo to Secretary, No.35, 13 December 1953.

165. NA RG 84, Box 248 Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, from Cairo to Secretary, 11 December 1953.

On 15 December Secretary Dulles sent a personal message to Eden asking the United Kingdom to prepare a draft of an agreement which would cover all the points of principle including those on "uniform and availability". He also indicated his readiness to play an active role to persuade Egypt to accept the British terms.¹⁶⁶ These steps reflected American fears that the prolongation of the deadlock might erode further American-Egyptian relations. In Egypt, Ambassador Caffery resumed his efforts to impress upon Dr. M. Fawzi, the Egyptian foreign minister, the need to find "an adequate availability formula", confirming that "the British are sincere when they talk of their problem".¹⁶⁷

Political tension in Egypt was now mounting, and guerrilla warfare against the British Canal base was resumed.¹⁶⁸ The need for American-Egyptian collaboration at this stage, however, led the Egyptian foreign minister to tell Caffery that "If anyone makes peace with Israel it will be the Egyptians after they get rid of the British",¹⁶⁹ knowing that the first priority of American strategy in the area was that Egypt should become the first Arab state to make peace with Israel.

Egyptian policy-makers tried at this stage to exploit this trend in American policy in order to gain more American support against the British position. They took steps to convince the United States that it would be the stabilising factor in achieving peace with Israel.

166. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, from Secretary to Cairo 662, and London 3178, 15 December 1953.

167. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian, from Cairo to Secretary, Department 703, 22 December 1953.

168. The Times, 18 December 1953; Mohamed Naguib, Kuntu Raisan L-Misr, pp.320-1.

169. NA RG 84, Box 248, Folder 321, Anglo-Egyptian, from Cairo to Secretary, 22 December 1953.

Yet this Egyptian offer did not induce the United States to alter its stand regarding economic and military aid to Egypt, since it believed that Egypt's advocacy of neutralism would have an "adverse effect in other Middle Eastern countries". State Department analysts believed neutralism "would undercut moderate elements and embolden extremists to demand their government to exert similar pressure".¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, Egyptian failure to obtain American aid produced a feeling of despair in Egyptian political circles. Caffery reported that Dr. Fawzi, the Egyptian foreign minister, complained bitterly against the Americans for "using economic pressure in favour of the British".¹⁷¹ It was nevertheless difficult for the Eisenhower administration to furnish Egypt with its economic and military needs not only because of the British stance, but also because of American domestic political considerations. Therefore, the United States did not provide Egypt with economic and military aid at this stage of the negotiations. From the foregoing we can conclude that American lack of support for Egypt cannot be attributed to a single cause or explanation, but to a variety of diverse factors. An added complication to the overall situation was the power struggle between Nasser and Naguib, which began in December 1952, and was now reaching its climax.

Nasser's Role

During this period Nasser realised that he was at a disadvantage politically. The masses were loyal to Naguib and impatient to win

170. NA RG 59, Box 5368 874.00 TA/12-353, from Department to American Embassy, Cairo, 31 December 1953.

171. NA RG 59, Box 5368 874.00 RA/2854, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 28 January 1954.

back constitutional liberties once represented by the Egyptian parliamentary system. Nasser understood clearly America's aims and objectives in Egypt and, being a pragmatist, he tried to strengthen his position when, in January 1954, he ingratiated himself with the United States in order to attract and solicit its support.¹⁷² On the other hand, Naguib tried to side with traditional political parties and the Muslim Brotherhood. There is no doubt that Naguib's affiliations would conflict with American strategy in Egypt, which was based upon supporting the military dictatorship against the parliamentary system.

The colonel desperately needed an agreement, for he regarded it as an essential prerequisite to consolidating his power.¹⁷³ Thus before the end of his struggle with Naguib, Nasser decided to take the risk of compromising. In January 1954 he secretly offered to smooth the path for negotiations by demonstrating his readiness to include Turkey in the reactivation of the base clause, despite the opposition of several of his RCC colleagues.¹⁷⁴ In Ambassador Caffery's view, "Nasser is the only man in Egypt with the strength enough and guts enough to put over an agreement with the British".¹⁷⁵ Nasser's sudden flexibility and pragmatism allowed Caffery to reassess American policy in Egypt. Most American political analyses and assessments of the situation considered the removal of General Naguib as opening the door to internal

172. Interview with K. Roosevelt. See also NA RG 59 774/12-5-52, from Cairo to Secretary, 5 December 1952.

173. Lacouture, *op.cit.*, p.206.

174. NA RG 59, top secret file, Dept. CA 6247, 30 April 1954, from Caffery to Secretary, 10 May 1954

175. NA RG 59, Box 4016 A 774.00/3-3-154, from Cairo to Secretary of State No.1218, 3 March 1954, secret.

dissension, and predicted further difficulties in foreign relations.¹⁷⁶
Caffery's and the CIA's assessments, however, were to the contrary.¹⁷⁷

In order to court the United States further, Nasser showed a greater willingness to handle the internal situation when, on 11 January 1954, he arrested a large number of the Muslim Brotherhood who had flatly rejected any concessions to the British,¹⁷⁸ and who were considered more dangerous opponents of Nasser and his colleagues than the out-lawed communists and the other dissolved traditional parties.¹⁷⁹ Nasser proceeded to create a more favourable climate for the negotiations. The dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood eliminated Naguib as the centre of rival power too. Consequently, the balance of power between the two leaders was quickly tipped in favour of Nasser. Events soon proved that Nasser had become the real ruler of Egypt in name as well as in fact.

As of January 1954, Nasser's flexibility and his readiness to include Turkey in the reactivation clause,¹⁸⁰ encouraged Ambassador Caffery to urge Fadil al-Jamali, the Iraqi prime minister, to persuade Nasser on the viability of British re-entry in the case of an attack on Turkey as well as Iran.¹⁸¹ But Nasser would only agree to such an initiative

176. *The Times*, 26 February 1954, "Removal of modern influence".

177. Interview with K. Roosevelt, Washington, D.C.

178. NA RG 84, Dept. No.345, from Cairo to Secretary of State, memo. of conversation, 5 August 1953.

179. *Al-Ahram*, January 1954; *La Couture*, *op.cit.*, pp.249-52; NA RG 59 774.00/1-26554, from Caffery to Dulles, 26 January 1954; NA RG 59 774.00/3-254, from Cairo to Secretary, 3 March 1954. Nasser reported to Caffery that in his opinion "most of these leaders are opportunists".

180. Ahmed Hamroush, *Qissat thawrat 23*, p.345. Khalid Muhiyy al-Din, a former member of the RCC, asserted that "the Americans supported Nasser against Naguib because of his acceptance of the inclusion of Turkey in the reactivation clause".

181. NA RG 84, Box 255, Folder 320, Egypt-Iraq, 10 January 1954, from Cairo to Secretary.

on condition that Iran was not to be included in the agreement with the British. The Caffery initiative came at a moment when the British were insisting that they had the right to re-occupy the base in the event of "world war",¹⁸² despite Egyptian objections.

Taking into account Nasser's new status in Egypt, Ambassador Caffery tried to convince him to accept Iran as well as Turkey in the event of the reactivation of the base. Nevertheless, Nasser was adamant on this point, for he believed that his newly-acquired position within the country would be undermined, especially in the eyes of his rivals. To accept the American formula unconditionally and wholeheartedly¹⁸³ would have been detrimental to his prestige as a nationalist leader.

On 3 February Nasser tried to persuade his colleagues in the RCC to accept the inclusion of Turkey or Iran in any negotiated agreement over the Canal base. Although Nasser was not serious about the Iran part of the formula, he included it in order to encourage his RCC colleagues to accept eventually the inclusion of Turkey, a member of NATO, as the preferred choice. This tactic of Nasser's appeared to be consistent with American strategy, especially in the eastern Mediterranean which would have welcomed a closer link between Egypt and NATO. Ambassador Caffery welcomed Nasser's efforts in this direction.¹⁸⁴

With Naguib out of the picture, there was a feeling of expectation in American circles that Anglo-Egyptian relations would improve.¹⁸⁵

182. NA RG 84, Box 256, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Secretary to Cairo 864, 29 January 1954.

183. NA RG 84, Box 256, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations (Turkey), to Secretary from Cairo, 28 January 1954.

184. NA RG 84, Box 256, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Elting, his conversation with Ali Sabri to American ambassador (Caffery), 3 February 1954.

185. NA RG 84, Box 255, Egypt 350-1954, from Cairo to Secretary, 25 February 1954.

Nasser's eagerness to achieve an agreement with Britain through his secret contacts with the Americans led him to keep all of his aides and colleagues in the dark, including his political adviser, Dr. Fawzi,¹⁸⁶ who, according to Raymond Hare, was a "good technician",¹⁸⁷ and in Nutting's view, "a most gifted career diplomat and negotiator".¹⁸⁸

The British were reluctant to make any concessions in return for Nasser's flexibility. Major Salah Salem, the RCC spokesman, declared on 10 February, "We refuse to co-operate in any way with anyone who stands against our dignity and our freedom". When reporters questioned him about the negotiations, he replied, "I have almost forgotten these words because the situation has not changed since 21 October 1953".¹⁸⁹ The gap between the tone and the actual policy became evident when, two weeks later, Nasser secretly contacted the American ambassador, offering the inclusion of Turkey if "Britain gives up the uniform"¹⁹⁰ for their technicians.

While Nasser was maintaining his policy of accommodation with the United States, he was racing against time to secure his position in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. By eliminating Naguib's power base, Nasser had not yet neutralised all of his rivals, both from within and

186. NA RG 59, Box 4020 774-11/3-1754, from Cairo, "Fawzi is not in the picture or fully cognisant with the British negotiations", to Secretary of State, 17 March 1954.

187. Interview with R. Hare, Washington, D.C.

188. Nutting, *op.cit.*, pp.70-1.

189. RG 59, Box 1978, 674-00/2-1259, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, 12 February 1954, Salah Salem defines non-co-operation policy.

190. NA RG 84, Box 256, Folder 320, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 10 March 1954.

without the country. In the context of the "Arab Cold War" where Egypt and Iraq were competing for the leadership of the Arab world, Iraq seemed initially to hold a number of advantages over Egypt. The American-Iraqi military agreement in April 1954 increased Nasser's suspicions that any further delay in the Anglo-Egyptian agreement might induce Washington to support Nuri al-Said's leadership in the Arab world. Consequently Nasser wanted to reach a quick settlement with the West.¹⁹¹ At the end of March he promised Caffery to call off the guerrilla activities that had plagued the British presence in the Canal Zone for the preceding four months.¹⁹² In so doing, he created a favourable climate for negotiations. On 1 April 1954 he told the Americans that he "wanted to go ahead without delay with British agreement".¹⁹³ A breakthrough was achieved when Churchill and Eden apparently yielded to American pressure. They accepted the idea of granting Egypt economic aid because "it should have a favourable effect on negotiations".¹⁹⁴

However, the issues of the availability and duration were the primary obstacles in breaking the impasse, and the United States became the principal intermediary at the negotiating table. Behind the scenes, the United States renewed its efforts to break the deadlock. On

191. Interview with K. Roosevelt. See also NA RG 84, Box 255, Folder 350, Egypt, from Cairo to Secretary, 31 March 1954.

192. NA RG 84, Box 255, Folder 320, Anglo-Egyptian, accidents, to Secretary from Cairo, 23 March 1954.

193. RG 59 Box 1854, 611-7418-1154 LWC, from Caffery to Secretary, 1 April 1954.

194. NA RG 59 Box 5366 874-00/4-2054, 20 April, to Secretary from Byroade, economic aid to Egypt; NA RG 59 Box 5366 874-00/4-2254, from Paris (Dulles) to Secretary of State, 22 April 1954; NA RG 84 Box 256, Folder 320-1, from Dulles (American Embassy, Paris) to Cairo No.39, 22 April 1954 (Eden and Dulles discussion on possibility of American aid to Egypt).

30 April, the State Department drafted a top secret memorandum of understanding to cover the whole situation. It suggested that "the agreement should last for ten years from the date of its entry into force [furthermore] all of Her Majesty's force will be withdrawn from Egyptian territory within a period of twenty-four months from the entry of this agreement into force". The State Department suggested in its formula the American association with the final agreement, as it "could become a party to a tripartite agreement".¹⁹⁵ The Foreign Office acknowledged the American "Draft Memorandum of understanding", since from the British point of view it was in line with the thinking of the Foreign Office as to the sort of agreement that would be offered to the Egyptians". Furthermore, the British welcomed the American participation in the negotiations, because they tried to avoid the risk of the Egyptians playing off the Americans against them during the course of the talks.

In May 1954 Nasser pointed out to Caffery that it was politically impossible for him to accept more than "seven years' duration or more than fifteen months for withdrawal". Apart from these two points in Nasser's way of thinking "there would not be any real obstacles" in achieving the agreement with the United Kingdom.¹⁹⁶

The State Department's compromise formula to break the deadlock was effective. The two sides wanted a final arrangement, albeit for different reasons.

195. NA, top secret file from Acting Secretary Smith, to Cairo, London, NOCA 6247, 30 April 1954.

196. NA, top secret file from London to Cairo Department CA 6247, 30 April and 4 June 1954, Anglo-Egyptian relations; FO comments on Departmental Working Papers.

Shortly after becoming the undisputed master of Egypt, Nasser and his colleagues dined secretly with the British ambassador and his staff on 10 June 1954. Nasser pointed out to them Egypt's readiness to conclude an early settlement.¹⁹⁷ He regarded this as a radical attempt at remoulding the country.¹⁹⁸ This led him to consider the possibility of Egyptian participation in "a regional pact and even a Turkish-Pakistani pact".¹⁹⁹ Nasser's compromise did not improve the situation. In the light of British intransigence and Egyptian domestic factors, "Nasser's patience was running out". The Egyptian government increased its pressure on the United States to bridge the gap, and on 22 June 1954, Dr. Fawzi indicated to Caffery that the Egyptians hoped that they would "not be sold down the river" at the Anglo-American summit meeting.²⁰⁰

Egyptian pressure made an impact on the American policy-makers. Before the Anglo-American summit meeting of June 1954, both Dulles and Eisenhower decided not to "side with Britain" because "the Arabs would want to throw both of [them] out of the oil lands". The American assessment can be attributed to Nasser's alliance with Saudi Arabia, which was certainly not in conflict with United States' interests in the area,²⁰¹ but could be used as a trump card at a critical time against

197. NA RG 59 Box 4023 774-00 (W) 6-1059, from USRMA, Cairo, to Department, Washington, 11 June 1959.

198. Interview with Ali Sabri, Cairo, February 1985.

199. NA RG 84 Box 256, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, to Secretary from Cairo sent Department 1592, 29 June 1954.

200. NA RG 84 Box 258, Folder 320-1, Anglo-Egyptian relations, from Cairo to Secretary, 23 June 1954.

201. D.D. Eisenhower Library, James Hagerty (Press secretary to the president) papers, 1953-1961, Diary Box 1, 28 June 1954.

the West.²⁰² This position provided Dulles and Eisenhower with the confidence to confront Churchill and Eden openly during their meetings and to press them for quick and comprehensive agreement with Egypt.

The Agreement

Yielding to American pressure, on 27 June Eden finally agreed to the concessions which made a settlement with Egypt possible.²⁰³ Nothing could illustrate the American influence better than Churchill's statement to the House of Commons when he said that "I have for some time been of the opinion that the United States has a strategic interest in Egypt as well as interests in the international waterway of the Canal, and the responsibility for both of these matters should no longer be allowed to rest exclusively with Great Britain".²⁰⁴

Needless to say, American inducement and the reduction of the strategic importance of Egypt due to modern developments in warfare, led the British government to modify its stand vis-a-vis Egypt. Shortly after that, on 27 July, following the anniversary celebration of King Farouk's abdication, and after several days of short meetings the draft agreement was concluded at Mr. Caffery's residence.²⁰⁵ The final

202. RG 59 Box 2979 674-86A/6-1259, 12 June 1959, American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State (S. Salem announces results of his talks with King Saud) ; Box 2979, 677-86A/6-1354, 13 June 1959, from Jidda to Secretary of State.

203. New York Times, 1 August 1954.

204. New York Times, 15 July 1954, p.2, excerpts from the speeches of Attlee and Churchill in Commons; Ali Sabri interview, "The American embassy informed the Egyptian side of British point of view before the meetings".

205. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, p.214.

agreement was signed on 19 October 1954, and embodied the following principles:

1. Withdrawal of British troops from the Canal base within twenty months.
2. Termination of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance.
3. British civilian technicians to maintain certain installations.²⁰⁶
4. In the event of an armed attack by an outside power "other than Israel" on any of eight Arab states who were parties to the 1950 Treaty of Joint Defence or Turkey, Egypt shall afford the United Kingdom such facilities as may be necessary in order to place the base on a war footing and to operate effectively.²⁰⁷
5. Immediate consultation between Britain and Egypt in the event of attack by outside power on the above-mentioned states.
6. Immediate British withdrawal at the termination of such a war.
7. Over-flight, landing and servicing rights for announced Royal Air Force flights.
8. Recognition of the international importance of the Suez Canal which is an integral part of Egypt and mutual guarantees to uphold the 1888 Constantinople Convention.

206. According to Dulles' statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 27 July 1954, he mentioned the possibility of American participation with Britain in handling technical operations of the base: executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VI-83, Congress sessions 1954, statement of J.F. Dulles, 27 July 1954, pp.686-7.

207. NA RG 84 Box No.1, Egypt 1953-1955, Department of State, Washington, official information, 5 January 1955, "The Suez Agreement".

9. Agreement to remain in force for seven years.²⁰⁸

It seems that the agreement marked the end of the era of friction between Egypt and the Western powers in the area. To some extent the terms of the agreement represented a new phase of Egyptian diplomacy from a covert anti-Soviet attitude to that of an overt one.

The accord shows that the American policy during the Anglo-Egyptian dispute of 1952-1954, orchestrated by the State Department and Ambassador Caffery, which sometimes antagonised the two sides in the conflict, was not challenged. Both sides were well aware that they could not settle their conflict without American mediation. On the Egyptian side, it was hoped that the United States was going to present its own plan as a basis for the agreement, this being closer to their own position than Britain's. However, most of the time the United States preferred to keep its engagement at the level of the mediator, and to go no further.

When the agreement was eventually signed it reinforced the British position in the region, yet only superficially, for in actuality it had confirmed that the balance of power between the United States and Britain in the area had tipped in favour of the former. A successful mediation by the US indicated that by fulfilling such a role, to some extent the US could secure its role as the guardian of Western interests in the area, both present and future.

208. For more details see New York Times, 28 July 1954, pp.1-2, "Initial Suez Pact signed for British exit". Great Britain, Foreign Office, agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Egyptian Government regarding the Suez Canal Base.

This settlement was hailed by Egypt, Britain and the United States as the beginning of a new chapter of collaboration between them. Shortly after concluding the agreement, Dr. Fawzi stated to Caffery that, "Egyptians will not endeavour to make trouble for the United States in Libya...Egypt will not endeavour to make trouble for the British in Iraq; on the contrary they will counsel 'sweet reasonableness' on Iraqis".²⁰⁹

Egyptian optimism led Nasser to advise King Saud during their meeting to avoid difficulties with the United States and the West.²¹⁰ On 3 August 1954, Nasser confirmed that "Egypt is confident that this agreement will start a new era of closer co-operation with the United States as well as with all other friendly countries". Fawzi reiterated the same position in his personal message to Dulles.²¹¹ The agreement enabled Nasser to declare that "We are fighting an open battle in Egypt with the communists, since we are convinced that they are working under Soviet direction".²¹²

Secretary Dulles welcomed the agreement because in his view it "will establish the foundation for even closer collaboration between our countries on the problems affecting the Near Eastern area, and in the long run the agreement will produce greater stability and defensive strength in the area".²¹³ Eisenhower also hoped that the agreement

209. RG 59 Box 2978, 674.00/8-754, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 7 August 1954.

210. NA RG 59 774.00(W) 8-2054, from USARMA Cairo to G2 Department No.200849, August 1954, joint week, 20 August 1954.

211. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles papers, Box No.85, Nasser 1954, Department of State, exchange of messages following statement of Suez Canal Agreement.

212. NA RG 59 Box 2978, 674.00/8-454, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 4 August 1954, Nasser's interview with Relman Morion of AP.

213. Department of State Bulletin, 16 August 1954, "Secretary Dulles to Nasser", p.234.

would allow Egypt to go ahead with her friends in improving both her economic and security position.²¹⁴ In early August, in fulfilment of its promises, the Eisenhower administration agreed to grant Egypt \$20m for economic development.²¹⁵ The American scale of economic aid disappointed the Egyptian leaders as they had expected at least \$100m.²¹⁶

Nevertheless, both the United States and Egypt were looking forward to the achievement of their respective goals. The American leaders hoped that the Egyptian-Turkish bilateral talks "would constitute best methods associating Egypt with Northern Tier Grouping".²¹⁷ Moreover, there was expectation that the strengthening of United States-Egyptian relations would present a new framework in which the United States could take more effective measures in ensuring the peace and stability which Israel and the United States desired so much.²¹⁸

214. NA RG 84/361-1 Box No.2, Egypt 1953-1955, telegram No.149, 29 July 1954, Eisenhower press conference, 28 July 1954.

215. Department of State Bulletin, 16 August 1954, p.234, "Mr. Eden to Mr. Dulles"; D.D. Eisenhower Library, papers of Dulles, telephone call series, Box No.2, telephone memo., 1 July, telephone call from Governor Stassen, 27 July 1954. Eisenhower administration offered Cairo \$27m in military aid, but Nasser refused to accept the American terms, according to Section 503(B), Mutual Security Act. He explained that "if he accepted the American terms he would be accused of selling his country to another big power before the British even got out of the place", Donald Neff, Warriors at Suez, p.60. NA RG 59 Box 4024, 18-3054, from Cairo to Secretary, 30 August 1951, 774-5MSP.

216. NA RG 59 Box 4024, 774-5-MSP/9-1454, memo. from Mr. Jernegan, subject, US aid to Egypt, 14 September 1954, from Mr. Roosevelt; "Nasser and RCC expected \$100m economic aid since they are asking for no military aid".

217. NA RG 59, outgoing telegram to American Embassy, Ankara, from Dulles, 11 November 1954, secret.

218. NA RG 59 674-84 A/-554 CS/W, memo. of conversation, Department of State, subject, Israel-Egypt relations, General Moshe Dayan, NEA, Jernegan, Bergus, 5 August 1954, D.D. Eisenhower Library.

Egypt's readiness for "close co-operation" with the United States and more flexibility was demonstrated when Dr. Fawzi expressed his government's hopes of resolving the Palestine question peacefully. Also Nasser confirmed Egypt's willineness to end the situation "now existing between Israel and the Arab countries". At the end of his interview with the New York Times, Nasser offered an open invitation to the United States to act as mediator between the Arab states and Israel "since the United States was apparently able to settle the dispute".²¹⁹

These hopes were dashed as other issues emerged to cloud this sunny interlude in American-Egyptian relations. The most troublesome conflict was the Arab-Israeli problem and the special relationship between Israel and the United States. Events soured these expectations as both sides tried to achieve a variety of goals, some of whose aims were contradictory in nature.

219. NA RG 59 674-00/8-454, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 4 August 1954.

CHAPTER FIVE
PEACE COLLAPSES

In 1951 Ben Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister, said, "Egypt is the keystone for peace in the Near East" and that "a peace agreement with that country would go a long way to bring about a peace agreement with the other neighbouring Arab countries".¹ King Hussein noted that of the 670 miles of hostile border between Israel and its Arab neighbours, Egypt had to defend 180 miles, Syria 45 miles, Lebanon over 50, and Jordan 400. The Israeli-Jordanian border was in fact the site of the most frequent hostilities, while Egypt was far less anxious about its proximity to Israel, until the Israeli raid on Gaza in 1955.² In the "Philosophy of the Revolution", Nasser mentions, "...it is not true that the July 23 Revolution broke out as a result of the Palestine offensive or because of the defective arms which claimed so many victims. We were fighting in Palestine but all our thoughts were centred on Egypt".³ The Free Officers, in other words, were not preoccupied with the issue of Palestine. In their published manifesto they did not mention Israel or Zionism.⁴ This encouraged the Israeli government to hope that peace was not a remote consequence. Prime Minister David

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1. Harry S. Truman Library, papers of Dean Acheson, memo. of conversation, 1951 Box 55, folder May, memo. subject, visit of Prime Minister of Israel, 8 May 1951.
 2. King Hussein of Jordan, *Uneasy lies the Head* (New York 1963), p.86.
 3. Gamal Abdel Nasser, The Philosophy of the Revolution (n.d., n.p.9, pp.11-12.
 4. Hamrush, Kharif Abdel Nasir, Vol.5, p.15.

Ben Gurion made a conciliatory speech, and privately offered technical aid to the new regime.⁵ Five days after the military regime took over, the Israeli ambassador in Washington pointed out to the Americans that "they hoped the new regime in Egypt might open a way for Egyptian-Israeli peace".⁶

The Americans were equally optimistic about the prospects of peace on the grounds that such a development would eliminate the local cold-war tactics between the Arabs and the Jews as part of a wider world conflict. Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, pointed out to Ambassador Caffery in Cairo that he "should remind the prime minister informally of our continued hope that Egypt and Israel can reach understanding. We consider such understanding in the interest not only of Egypt but the Near East as a whole".⁷

Events encouraged expectations of peace, and the military regime was keen to maintain the calm that had prevailed along the Egyptian border with Israel in order to concentrate on consolidating the revolution and eliminating British influence in Egypt. From this perspective it paid Egypt to suppress its belligerence towards Israel in return for American support in resolving its internal problems. In the early days of the revolution the military leaders were pragmatic enough to understand that Egypt's financial resources did not allow for

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5. NA RG 59 674.84A/6-2353, official information, top secret, security information from Caffery to Parker, T. Hart, Cairo, 23 June 1953; NA RG 84-320, Israel-Egypt, to Secretary charged to Embassy, Cairo, 22 August 1952, David Ben Gurion, My talks with the Arab leaders, pp.269-70.
 6. NA RG 59 Box 4015 774-00/7-3 152, memo. of conversation, participants, Abba Eban, M. Hart, subject, Israel view on Egypt situation, 31 July 1952.
 7. NA RG 84 Box 219-320, Israel and Egypt, from Secretary of State, Washington, to Cairo and Tel Aviv, 21 August 1952.

economic development and mobilisation towards a full-scale war with Israel.⁸ Moreover, the old regime's policy of keeping the door open with its frequent attempts at achieving a peace settlement with Israel,⁹ encouraged the military regime to follow these conciliatory steps as they did not have any previous commitments for a retaliatory war against Israel. Furthermore, Nasser and his colleagues were not ambivalent in the face of Egyptian extremists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. Some powerful members in the Muslim Brotherhood organisation had shown a greater willingness to compromise, demonstrating their readiness to achieve peace with Israel.¹⁰

In addition, Nasser and his colleagues were professional military men, and they understood perfectly well the realities of Egypt's military potential vis-a-vis Israel. Most of them had already faced the Israelis on the battlefield in Palestine. During that time the junta needed to consolidate its power as rapidly as possible in the face of difficult domestic problems. The lesson to be drawn from the failure of the ancien regime was that a military confrontation with Israel would lead to their collapse. Furthermore, a long time before the revolution, the junta had been influenced by leftist political groups, who accepted in principle Israel's existence. According to Jean and Simon Lacouture, in 1949 the Free Officers contacted leftist political groups in Egypt that had previously supported the UN

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8. Interview with Ali Sabri, Cairo, 6 February 1985; ~~RG 59~~ Box 29978-674-84A/19-2352, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 23 September 1952.
 9. NA RG 59 Box 4037-780-5/7-352, memo. of conversation, top secret, 3 July 1952, The Wafd contacts the Israeli authorities in Paris and they hold "ten meetings"; also NA RG 84 Box 219 320, Israel and Egypt, from Secretary, Washington, to American Embassy, Cairo, 14 July 1952, and Tel Aviv.
 10. RG 59 674-84A/3-553, from American Embassy to the Department, despatch 1763, 2 March 1953, Renewed Egyptian interest in peace with Israel: M.Maklout (son of General Mufti and nephew of the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood) proposals to settle Egyptian-Israeli dispute.

partition plan for Palestine, in order to discuss possible new directions for Egyptian policy on Palestine.¹¹ Then, Nasser, unlike some of his Arab colleagues, had always been flexible on the subject of Israel.¹² It was within the wider context of Egypt's overwhelming immediate problems that Nasser viewed the simmering dispute with Israel as a top priority in policy-making.

All that can be said with confidence is that Egypt under the new regime was aware that conciliatory statements about the Arab-Israeli conflict would have a favourable effect on its relations with Washington. These were of great importance because Egypt was in need of economic and military aid, while American diplomatic support in its negotiations with Britain would facilitate a speedy and favourable resolution.

The Eisenhower Administration and the Arab-Israeli Problem

Egypt's new policy encouraged Washington to assume a more direct role vis-a-vis the Egyptian-Israeli conflict, while also reassessing American policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.

When the Republicans assumed office, the situation had been different from that of their predecessors. The Palestine war had been over for four years, and all the actors concerned had had to adjust themselves to the new circumstances, while some had even disappeared from the political scene.

The new American president, unlike Truman, did not have close Jewish friends or pro-Israeli friends, such as Clark Clifford, who

11. Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, pp.232-3.

12. Interview with Mahmoud Riad, Cairo, 1985.

could influence him at critical moments with respect to Israel's status quo in the Middle East.¹³ He was also not dependent on Jewish electoral support,¹⁴ since most of them had backed his Democratic opponent, Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower's popularity as a military hero freed him from the immediate election concerns stirred by the changed issue of support for Israel. As a military man, he saw the Arab world in particular as a significant arena for containing the Soviet Union, especially after the Korean War.¹⁵ According to the Jackson Committee Report which had been submitted to him shortly after his inauguration, "The US failure to act justly between the Arabs and the Jews will give a great chance to the Soviet Union to play an active role in the area...and gives her a chance to build up her own 'NATO' in Western Asia".¹⁶ Dulles reiterated the same position, declaring that it was "high time that the United States government paid more attention to the Near East and South Asia".¹⁷ At the outset the Republican administration realised that Truman's uneven policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict would lead to "silence and weaken modest Arab opinion holding pro-Western sentiments".¹⁸ There were some noticeable changes in the early Eisenhower years as the focal point of the Dulles stewardship of foreign policy was directed on Soviet penetration and international communism, and the desire to

13. Truman Library, Clifford papers.

14. D.D. Eisenhower Library, papers of J.F. Dulles, White House, memo. White House correspondence 1953(1), 28 October 1953, from Eisenhower to Dulles; Steven L. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict, pp.52-3.

15. Ibid., pp.52-3.

16. D.D. Eisenhower Library, records of President Committee of Int. Information Activities, Jackson Committee, Box No.4, folder correspondence E(1), March 1953.

17. Department of State Bulletin, 15 June 1953, p.831.

18. NA RG 59 Box 2846 611-8012-1953, to Under-Secretary from NEA Mr.H.Byroade, 17 February 1953.

contain them.¹⁹ As for the Arab-Israeli conflict, the stress was put on the concept of "impartial friendship".²⁰ Israel's importance diminished as increased weight was given to other forces in formulating United States policy in the area. Arab oil and the strategic importance of the Arab states became key considerations in the struggle against Soviet penetration in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the Arab-Israeli conflict remained the main obstacle in strengthening the region against possible Soviet encroachment.²¹

United States Efforts for restoring Peace in the Area and Its Impact on United States-Egyptian Relations

At certain times the United States had adopted a covert and overt diplomacy in which its primary goal was to prevent any further deterioration in the relations between the two sides, thus limiting further Soviet penetration in the area at the expense of American strategy. Washington tried to achieve a variety of goals, some of them contradictory. On the one hand, it wanted to show a willingness to support and reinforce the new Arab nationalisms while at the same time keep up its special relationship with Israel. The United States therefore faced a big dilemma in handling the Egyptian-Israel dispute, although the two parties showed a great willingness to achieve peace for their own sakes. The main problem facing the two belligerents was that they did not trust each other even in a limited way, and this was the main obstacle in achieving even a limited resolution of the conflict.²² This handicapped

19. Truman Library, Lucius Battle, Oral History, No.305, Copy 2, pp.17-21.

20. NA(NSC)-155/1, July 1953, United States' objectives and policies with respect to the Near East.

21. Ibid.

22. Bernard Reich, The United States and Israel, p.5. Also see, Princeton University, J.F. Dulles papers, Box 62, Middle East 1952, memo. of meeting with Zafrulla Khan, 18 November 1952.

American policy-makers in the Middle East, and they tried to avoid it. For the Egyptians it was difficult to bring about a drastic change in Arab public opinion, and especially in Egyptian public opinion, from that of hostility towards and suspicion of Israel and Jews in general, to ensure understanding and co-operation in a short time, unless Israel showed a great willingness for compromise. The most important objective which the United States could try to achieve was the building of trust in the relations between the two sides rather than the imposition of a forced resolution on them.

Nevertheless, we are going to examine the American management of the Egyptian-Israeli dispute from the end of 1952 to 1956, and its effects upon American-Egyptian relations and how the Egyptian-Israeli conflict had undermined the cordial relations existing between the military regime and the Republican administration.

In one sense the idea of a negotiated settlement with Egypt had existed since the time the military regime took power. All actors had adjusted to the new circumstances. Shortly after the revolution, on 18 August, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion stated in the Keneset that "We have no enmity against Egypt".²³ The State Department appreciated the conciliatory speech, and asked its representative in Tel Aviv to tell the Israeli prime minister that they "hope[d] Egypt and Israel can reach an understanding".²⁴

23. NA RG 84 Box 219-320, Israel-Egypt 1952, from American Embassy, Tel Aviv, sent Department 286, 19 August 1952.

24. NA RG 84, Box 219-320, from Secretary of State to Tel Aviv, 185, 21 August 1952.

The Informal Talks

The Egyptian leadership did not ignore the new Israeli trend. Secretly the Egyptian prime minister did not exclude the possibility of having peace talks with Israel.²⁵ In Paris and Ankara the two sides already had had some secret informal meetings.²⁶ Dean Acheson welcomed these development, telling the Israeli ambassador in Washington that "he felt that the atmosphere towards Israel was much better than it has been before".²⁷ Encouraged by these moves and the Free Officers' reform programmes, Acheson persuaded President Truman to make a favourable statement about the Naguib regime. Such a declaration hinting at future American aid was made on 3 September 1952, and was favourably received in Cairo.²⁸

Egypt toned down its belligerence towards Israel, and on 6 August, after becoming Commander-in-Chief, General Naguib, at a press conference, declared publicly that "Egypt's entry into the Palestine was resulted from a decision made by the king" and that "the army was against it".²⁹ After becoming prime minister, Naguib and his colleagues had attended the opening of the Yom Kippur service at the principal synagogue in Cairo, and the Egyptian morning press showed Naguib shaking hands with the Grand Rabbi.³⁰ At a press conference, Salah Salem the spokesman for the

* Ali Maher

25. NA RG 59, Box 2978, 764-84A/8-2052, from Tel Aviv to Secretary of State, 20 August 1952.
26. NA RG 84, Box 230, Folder 350, Israel 1952, memo. of conversation between Abbas Bon, Mr. Jerengen, 20 October 1952. Also, FO.371/96998, 1952 FO Minutes, Sir James Bowker, 15 September 1952, The Israelies and Suez Canal.
27. Truman Library, Dean Acheson papers Box No.670, memo. of conversation, subject, visit by Ambassador Abba Eban, 29 September 1952, security information.
28. Ibid., memo. of 8 September 1952.
29. FO.371/96880/339, 1952, British Embassy, Cairo, 23 August to Africa Department, Foreign Office. Also The Times, 3 September 1952.
30. NA RG 84 Box 219-320, Israel-Egypt, 29 September 1952, from Cairo to Secretary.

military regime, left the door ajar when he did not exclude the possibility of having a peace settlement with Israel,³¹ and Nasser later on reiterated the same position to Caffery and to Kermit Roosevelt.³² Nasser's moderation was reflected in his speech on the subject.³³

Secret contacts were maintained through back channels. The Egyptian ambassador, Ahmad Husayn, in the USA, with the acquiescence of the military, pointed out to Caffery that "after Sudan and MEDO are out of the way Egypt should make peace with Israel".³⁴ At the Arab League meetings the Egyptian representative led the opposition to Iraq's proposals, that "Jews in the Arab countries to be treated like Arabs in Israel".³⁵

This show of moderation in the early days of the revolution can be attributed to the junta's willingness to concentrate on Egypt's domestic problems putting aside the other problems of the area since the latter were simply not top priority. The military leaders tried very hard to avoid any divisions in their ranks which might lead to their collapse. American support was vital to the military regime because of the lack of popular support and when old political forces were still waiting to restore their erstwhile position. The Egyptian attitude aroused great expectations in Washington. Ambassador Caffery, however, warned the

31. FO.371/96986, 1952, British Embassy, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 20 September 1952.

32. Mohamed Heikal, *Qissat al-Suwais*, pp.69-70

33. Khutab wa tasirahat al-ra'is Jamal, 1952-1959, : (Cairo 1959) p 122.

34. NA RG 59 Box 5378-874, 2321/11-1952, from Cairo to Secretary, 19 November 1952.

35. NA RG 59 Box 2978-674-84A/9002352, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 23 September 1952.

State Department against using American aid as a leverage to gain a quick Egyptian-Israeli settlement.³⁶

Caffery's recommendation did not go unheeded. Assistant Secretary Byroade pointed out to the Israeli ambassador in Washington that "We have not pressed Egypt in this regard because the Egyptians have a lot of house-cleaning to do before taking any step".³⁷ Nevertheless Byroade did not exclude the possibility of American pressure on Egypt "when the time was opportune".³⁸

The stalemate, however, continued despite all these activities and initiatives. The reason for this was that any pressure upon Egypt in these early days of the revolution might have been counter-productive. This idea had been planted in the minds of the makers of American policy by a number of Caffery's reports as well as by Naguib's and his colleagues' frequent promises that, after the British evacuation they could "reach an agreement with Israel".³⁹ The Americans were convinced that it was hard for Egypt to break the united Arab front against Israel,

36. RG 59 Box 2978 and 674 and 84A/9852, from Caffery to Department of State, 8 September 1952, subject, Israeli efforts to establish peace conversation with Egypt.

37. NA RG 84 Box 219-320, Israel-Egypt, memo. of conversation, participants, Mr. Byroade NEA and Ambassador Eban, 22 September 1959. For more details about the American stance, see

FO.371/96998 JE 1261/37, 21 September 1952, United States' reply to Israel note on Suez.

38. NA RG 84 Box 219-320, Israel-Egypt, *op.cit.*

39. NA RG 59 Box 2847 611-80/11-2552, top secret to Secretary from Cairo (Caffery) for Byroade, 25 November 1952, 1952 incoming telegram, top secret.

because of its heavy reliance on the Arab League's support for its stand against the British on the Canal Zone issue.⁴⁰

Secretly the Egyptian military leaders pointed out to Ambassador Caffery that this show of moderation did not signify any lessening of Egypt's moral support for the Arab cause against Israel. So long as such problems as payment of compensation to refugees, limitation of Israel's military force and guarantees that present Israeli boundaries would be fixed,⁴¹ remained unsolved, Egypt would refuse to consider any final peace settlement with Israel.

At the beginning American optimism was strong. It was widely believed that the Anglo-Egyptian talks would lead to an Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement, but the Egyptians gave much weight to the lame-duck Truman administration, and that delayed further initiatives to resolve the situation.

American negative reaction to Egyptian proposals alarmed Naguib. He restrained himself from criticising America by name, but vigorously denounced American policy on the subject, declaring that "In order to create a nation of one million you, the West, have spoiled the relations with fifty million Arabs who own among other things, great quantities of oil".⁴²

40. NA RG 59 674-84A/6-2353, official information, top secret, security information, from Caffery to Parker Hart, Cairo, 32 June 1953.

41. NA RG 59 Box 2847 611-80/11-2552, from Cairo, Caffery to Secretary of State, 25 November 1952, top secret, incoming telegram.

42. New York Times, 11 December 1952.

So in order to ease the tension and to gain Arab confidence, especially that of Egypt, Assistant Secretary Byroade gave a speech in December 1952 before the inauguration of President Eisenhower, declaring that "...the birth of the tragic Arab refugee problem out of the Palestine conflict has added to the real and deep-seated bitterness towards Americans throughout the Arab world...the emotions which surrounded this problem in the Middle East are so intense that any immediate or dramatic solution of the problem is impossible. Even progress towards a solution of any segment of the problem is at best exceedingly difficult".⁴³

Under the global cold-war circumstances the Republican administration decided to re-examine and possibly to reshape existing American policy in the Middle East. The lesson it drew from the failure of the previous administration was that a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict that might satisfy both sides was a prerequisite to the kind of defence arrangement that would satisfy the United States' military demands.⁴⁴ From the very beginning the Republican administration realised that an even-handed policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict would serve to build up a new American position in the area.

GROWING U.S. INVOLVEMENT

American concern led Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, to visit the Middle East in May 1953. This first visit of any Secretary

43. H. Byroade, "US foreign policy in the Middle East", US Department of State Bulletin, 15 December 1952, p.932.

44. US Department of State Bulletin, Dulles statement, 19 February 1953.

of State to the area was prompted, Dulles told the nation over radio and television, by the danger that Middle East might fall under communist domination, as had happened in China.⁴⁵ The announcement of Dulles' trip to the area was seen by Egypt as a concrete demonstration of America's new interest in the Arab world and its problems, and the hope that Truman's Israeli stand would now be replaced by greater impartiality was publicly expressed by Mohamed Naguib.⁴⁶ At their meeting Naguib informed Dulles that once the Suez Canal issue was resolved, he could reach "an agreement with Israel" as long as Egypt gained a "land communication with the other Arab states".⁴⁷ Simultaneously, better covert contacts with Israel were maintained through back channels. In this stage of early overtures, the Egyptians showed greater flexibility by accepting "the principles of settlement of refugees in Arab states".⁴⁸

In this new phase of quiet diplomacy, following Dulles' visit, Egypt and Israel renewed their efforts to resume their covert contacts. In their meetings the Egyptian side⁴⁹ suggested the possibility of reaching "some understanding on the transit through the Suez Canal of non-military goods destined for Israel".⁵⁰ There were also other

45. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles private papers, Box 73, Near East, Important point of trip 1953, by Dulles, secret, private.

46. Al-Ahram, 11 May 1953.

47. NA RG 59 Box 4037 78-0015-2953, Dulles trip to Near East, top secret, memo. of conversation between Naguib and Dulles, 5.00pm, 11 May 1953, p.5. See also Dulles papers, pp.1-2.

48. RG 59 BOX 1979-674-84A/2-1753, JAS, top secret security information from Paris, to Secretary, No.46251, 17 February 1953.

49. According to the Israeli charge d'affaires in Paris, the Egyptian side included "a civilian who has direct and very close relations with the RCC". See also RG 59 Box 2979 674-84A/7-653, American Embassy, Paris, to Secretary, 6 July 1953, top secret.

50. Ibid.

encouraging indirect contacts between the two sides. Dr. Fawzi, the Egyptian foreign minister, told Dr. Ralph Bunche of the UN that, "Egypt was interested in the possibility of talks with Israel", and suggested that "Egypt can accept one partition but not two", explaining to him why Cairo wanted a Negev corridor to linking it with Jordan.⁵¹ These feelers, however, were abandoned when the New York Times published the story.⁵² Nevertheless, Dr. Bunche and the American policy-makers agreed that an Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement might be within reach.⁵³

Publicly the Egyptian leaders, for instance, stated that "They should forget the past".⁵⁴ At one of his press conferences, Salah Salem declared that Egypt had no aggressive intentions against Israel, and told the journalists "that Egypt is a peace-loving nation".⁵⁵ Moreover, Egypt showed a greater willingness to compromise on the major outstanding issue, the settlement of refugees. On 1 July the Egyptian government signed an economic agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that would provide work for Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip and Sinai.⁵⁶ A measure of flexibility and pragmatism was evident in Egyptian policy.

51. NA RG 59 Box 2979 674-84A/9-1053, 10 September 1953, memo. of conversation, Ralph Bunche, NE, Mr. Hart.

52. Ibid., also New York Times, 30 March 1953/

53. NA RG 84 Box 247, Folder 320, Egypt and Israel, memo. of conversation, subject, peace feelers between Egypt and Israel; NA RG Box 4038, memo. of conversation, participants, Byroade, Mr. Harry Flammery, 21 August 1953.

54. RG 59 2979, op.cit., 28 August 1953, from Cairo to Department of State, restricted, "Egyptian policy on Palestine"

55. RG 59 Box 2979 674.84A/7-2853 LWC, 28 July 1953, from American Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Department of State.

56. The Times, 1 July 1953, Economic surveys for Gaza and Sinai.

It is clear that the Egyptian leadership began to move in three political directions at once. They tried to use the Arab-Israeli settlement as leverage to gain American support on the Suez Canal issue. Then the settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Gaza and Sinai might eliminate some specific obstacles hindering American policy in the area. The Egyptians tried to prove that Egypt was the key country for any peace in the Near East, and that without Egypt, no other Arab country would dare take a step towards a peace settlement with Israel. They wished to impress upon the United States that Egyptian policy towards Israel would become the model to be emulated by all other Arab states. Thus Cairo would often remind Washington that the central protagonist in the Arab world was Egypt, and that without Egypt nothing could be resolved.

Egyptian flexibility,⁵⁷ harsh Israeli tactics and tough attitude towards its neighbours,⁵⁸ led the United States to take its firmest stand in support of a United Nations order to Israel to desist. President Eisenhower instructed the Treasury Department to draft an order removing the tax-deductible status of contributions made by American citizens to the United Jewish Appeal and other Zionist organisations in America raising private funds for Israel.⁵⁹ On

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57. NA RG 84 Box 247-320, Egypt-Israel 1953, from Cairo to Department, although Israeli troops attacked Gaza "the Egyptian authorities have demonstrated unusual restraint in connection with publicity about this incident. The Israeli troops killed twenty-two persons", Stephen Green, Taking Sides, (New York: William Morrow 1984), p.60.
58. As well as attacking Gaza and el-Auja, Israeli forces attacked Kibya on the West Bank in October 1953 and its diversion of the Jordan river, ibid., pp.76-80.
59. Ibid., p.80.

18 September 1953 Dulles informed the Israeli ambassador in Washington that United States economic aid to Israel was suspended. In their conversation Secretary Dulles made clear to the ambassador his "conviction that the way to win peace was not by supporting Israel whether right or wrong". At the conclusion of his meeting with the Israeli ambassador, Dulles emphasised "his desire for early progress towards area peace".⁶⁰

Johnston's Plan

The Americans faced a dilemma at the end of 1953. An Anglo-Egyptian agreement was about to be reached.⁶¹ and Israelis feared that the settlement would lead Egypt and other Arab countries to join a Western defence pact. The departure of British troops from the Suez base would leave Israel exposed to attack from Egypt.⁶²

Israeli policy and eagerness to ease the tension and to reinforce its cold war in American strategy resulted in a new pattern in American policy-making, that of promoting an Arab-Israeli settlement. Dulles, the architect of American foreign policy, believed in a gradualist process to resolve the outstanding conflicts.⁶³ The United States thus adopted a new policy to settle the matter of the refugees and, on 14 October 1953, President Eisenhower announced the appointment of Eric

60. NA RG 59 Box 2979 611-84A/10-953 CS/CB, 9 October 1953, Department of State to American Embassy, Tel Aviv.

61. New York Times, 11 October 1953.

62. NA RG 84 Box 246, Folder 320, political relations, from Secretary, Washington, sent to Tel Aviv 276, 9 October 1953: Ambassador Eban called on Secretary 8 October 1953.

63. Saadia Touval, The Peace Brokers (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982), pp.109-10.

Johnston as Special Ambassador to the Near East. Johnston was to undertake a plan with certain of the Arab states and Israel for the purpose of the mutual development of the water resources of the Jordan river valley on a regional basis.⁶⁴

Some scholars considered Johnston's mission to be one of two major American initiatives in the 1950s to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute.⁶⁵ The mission was primarily motivated by the desire to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem which was a root cause of regional discontent. Johnston's main task was to create employment opportunities for the 800,000 Palestinian refugees in the Arab countries in the hope that they would be absorbed there.⁶⁶ Yet it was explicitly recognised by Under-Secretary General Bedel Smith that it was "unreasonable to expect Arab countries to accept refugees as workers unless means are found to improve conditions of their own citizens".⁶⁷

Arab reactions to this American initiative were mixed. The Egyptian press appreciated Eisenhower's policy "for his careful attention towards the Middle East problem", but this welcome by the Egyptian press did not lessen its attitude because "Mr. Eric Johnston's success does not seem very probable so long as the Palestine problem remains unsettled and as long as the United Nations' resolutions remain ink on paper".⁶⁸ The Egyptian government, however, initially lent support to the mission despite the objections of other Arab states.⁶⁹ According to Sir Humphrey

64. US Department of State Bulletin, 26 October 1953, p.533.

65. Touval, op.cit., pp.106-7.

66. Green, op.cit., p.77.

67. US Department of State Bulletin, 8 June 1953, p.824.

68. Al-Akhbar, 28 October 1953.

69. Middle Eastern Affairs, "Chronology", 16 October-15 November 1953, pp.430-1.

Trevelyan, one-time British ambassador to Cairo, "The Egyptians had given Mr. Johnston considerable technical help including the loan of Egyptian engineers".⁷⁰ Egypt may also have persuaded Syria and Jordan to reconsider their attitudes towards the Johnston plan.⁷¹ However, the Egyptians could not make public declarations of support so long as there was substantial Arab resistance.⁷²

Whether or not the Egyptian government used this accommodating policy as leverage to gain American support on the Suez Canal issue is debatable. In any case, Johnston's mission lasted for two years in the hope that the project would pave the way for the peace settlement. At the same time American hopes for an Egyptian contribution towards the success of the peace process were reflected in the fact that the US did not take any firm stand against Egypt in the United Nations over the blockade of Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal.⁷³

So long as there was no trust between the Arab states and Israel, the peace process could not succeed. Both sides were considerably preoccupied by the possibility that the other may at any time and for any reason, try to harm the other seriously. It was therefore essential to reduce the level of anxiety on all sides. Furthermore, the evenhanded approach with which the Eisenhower administration began to explore the

70. Humphrey Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, p.40. See also NA RG 59 322-2, Jordan Valley, Box No.1, Egypt 1953-1955, telegram sent to Secretary, 17 June 1954. At the close of the meeting Mr. Johnston expressed his appreciation of the atmosphere of cordiality in which the conversation took place, and for the famous hospitality extended to him and his staff in Cairo by the Egyptian government.

71. Love, *Suez: The Twice-fought War*, p.277.

72. Trevelyan, *op.cit.*, p.40.

73. NA RG 84 Box No2, File 350-25/2-1954, "America does not approve of taking a decision against Egypt".

Arab-Israeli issue - with its declared aim of improving relations with the Arab world - was viewed with alarm by Israel as it could lead to its isolation. Israeli fears and American eagerness to build a regional defence system shaped historical events in the Middle East area for the following years.

By the same token, the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute was viewed in Israel with misgivings since it increased the likelihood that Egypt, with other Arab countries, "will raise the price for co-operation with the West".⁷⁴ Moreover, the removal of British troops "might result in Egypt taking action with respect to Israel which would be unhelpful and could even lead to incidents with serious consequences".⁷⁵ Israeli suspicions led Ambassador Eban to point out to Henry Byroade that from the Israeli point of view "...the Suez Base Agreement removes buffer between Israel and Egypt and strengthens Egypt through the stores and facilities which inevitably will be left".⁷⁶ When the Americans fully realised Israeli anxieties, Assistant Secretary Byroade pointed out to Eban that "the United States considers itself committed to Israel to endeavour to induce Egypt to move forward on the Arab-Israeli problem".⁷⁷

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74. NA RG 84 Box 249, Folder 320, Israel-Russia, from American Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Department of State, 16 February 1953; *Mapam* daily *al-Hamishmar*, 15 February 1953 (Anglo-Egyptian accord on Sudan), cited in translation in State Department file.
75. NA RG 59 Box 4038 780.00/7-754, 7 July 1954, memo. of conversation, participants, Mr. Shiloah (the Israeli minister), Mr. MacArthur (NEA).
76. RG 59 2979 674-84A/7-3054, 30 July 1954, Department of State, memo. of conversation, participants, Ambassador Eban, and NEA Byroade.
77. Ibid.

Frequent American assurances⁷⁸ did not dampen Israeli fears, which had been raised to a high level as now the United States had to arm Egypt, a necessary consequence of the new development. On 29 July 1954, Moshe Sharett, the Israeli prime minister, declared that "The grant of arms to Egypt after the decision to arm Iraq will pile blunder upon blunder".⁷⁹ At the same time, the pro-Israeli lobby in America concentrated much of its efforts on preventing the United States from arming the Arab states, especially Egypt, as long as they refused to make peace with Israel.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, the Egyptian government showed greater willingness to compromise, and Nasser pointed out to James Johnson, a British Member of Parliament, that "Egypt had no intention whatsoever in starting a second round with Israel".⁸¹ Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi reiterated the same position, confirming that "Egypt wants to get along with Israel".⁸² Moreover, in the Arab League Egypt lent its support to a proposal to send the Palestinian refugees to Libya, despite the objections of other League members.⁸³

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- 78. NA RG 59 Box 2848 611-80-1954, outgoing telegram sent to circular 125-1959, 1 September, according to Istanbul Conference, "US would take appropriate action to protect Israel's security".
 - 79. NA RG 59 Box 2979 674-84A/7-2954, from Tel Aviv to Secretary of State, No.106, 29 July 1954, 4.00 pm.
 - 80. New York Times, 26 October 1954, "Jewish groups protest to Dulles", pp.14-16.
 - 81. RG 59 Box 2979 674-84A/2-654, from American Embassy, Cairo, to the Department of State, Washington, 6 February 1954.
 - 82. NA RG 59 774.00(W)/8-554, from USARM Cairo, to Washington, for G2, 7 August 1954.
 - 83. RG 59 Box 2979 764-87/9-1054, from Cairo to Secretary of State, 11 September 1954.

The new Egyptian trend to ease the tension with Israel at any cost,⁸⁴ must be viewed in conjunction with the regime's policy to improve relations with the United States, and its eagerness to consolidate its power as rapidly as possible in the face of strong domestic opposition. But, by now, American policy-makers understood that hopes for peace were all too fragile to be further endangered by disregarding the rights of one of the parties to the conflict.

For the State Department it was no secret that the Israelis were seeking to propagate the untenable thesis that only Israeli rights should be respected; that Arab rights should be denied. The State Department watched these events with growing frustration. On 30 August 1954 the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs informed Dulles in a secret memorandum entitled, "A possible assurance to Israel", that "Israel's concept of her role in the Near East is that of a dominant power with clear military superiority over all her neighbours combined....When Israel speaks of peace and co-operation in the Near East she means on her terms and with Arab acceptance of her policies".⁸⁵ The American National Security Council reiterated the same position to Eisenhower, emphasising that "...there has been no change in Israel's apparent policy of using force to accomplish political objectives".⁸⁶ For the Eisenhower

84. Since March 1954 Egypt had refrained from interfering with shipping passing through the Canal either to or from Israel. NA RG 84 Box 356, Folder 320, US to other countries, from Secretary to Cairo, 7 November 1954.

85. NA RG 59 Box 2841 611-84A/8-3054, to Secretary from Assistant Secretary NEA Jernegan, subject, Possible assurance to Israel, 30 August 1954.

86. NSC, Progress Report on US objectives and policies with respect to Near East, No.155/1, 30 July 1954.

administration there were a number of basic undeniable facts. One was that the tough Israeli attitude towards its neighbours would increase the "communist penetration in the area - although it was important for American strategy that the area be kept from the hands of the Soviets".⁸⁷ Soviet sympathy for the Arabs and the Egyptian case in the United Nations made it apparent that the Arab-Israeli dispute had become an international question. Israel appeared to be supported by the Anglo-American bloc, and the Arab states by the Russian bloc.

The Eisenhower administration tried to demonstrate to the Arab world that the American attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict had evolved with the new American leadership, but the facts of the situation did not substantiate this change. The Eisenhower administration was facing strong pressure groups that traditionally supported Israel in periods of stress. The true strength of this lobby may have been exaggerated, but it was perceived by the American leadership as being of great potential influence.⁸⁸ Thus any attempt to give aid to the Arabs was always met with opposition behind the scenes in Washington, where the members of Congress were acutely aware of the strong popular sentiment in the country for Israel.⁸⁹ Consideration for the great body of public

87. NA RG 59 Box 2848 611-80/9-154, Department of State to circular top secret, September 1954; RG Box 2848 611-80/91/654, memo. of conversation, 16 September 1954.

88. NA RG 59 Box 2848 611-80/1-1854, 18 February 1954, from Byroade to Robert Coulter, Special Assistant to President, "...[the Jewish lobby informed the State Department] arming Iraq or Saudi Arabia or any other Arab countries would be contrary to the interest of US and would seriously threaten the security of Israel".

89. NA RG 59 Box 2848 611-80/2-554, from members of Congress of the US House of Representatives to Secretary Dulles, 5 February 1954; D.D. Eisenhower Library series, Box No.4, staff notes, January-December 1954, Bipartisan Legislative meeting, 5 January 1954.

opinion in the United States favouring Israel played a large role in every government decision on Middle East issues.⁹⁰

To some extent it is true to say that pressure groups were most effective within Congress, although most analysts consider foreign policy to be the domain of the executive branch.⁹¹ Theoretically this latter statement is true, but apparently it was difficult for the Eisenhower administration to resist congressional pressures for ever. This can be attributed to its lack of a majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate.⁹² Therefore to some extent members of Congress and the pressure groups were able to exert a restraining influence on the new American approach towards the Arab-Israeli dispute.⁹³

Yet Dulles and Eisenhower did not yield completely to these pressure groups. Soviet containment was a top priority for the United States. Therefore it began to arm Iraq in April 1954. Israeli supporters considered that arms to a particular Arab state would eventually mean arms for all Arab states.⁹⁴ Israeli objections stemmed from the principle that "The Arabs could kill Israelis without any subsequent Israeli reactions" was close to becoming an international doctrine.⁹⁵ This theory led them to believe that American military aid to Arab countries and its support of the Baghdad Pact "would stiffen Arab

90. Sherman Adams, First-hand Report, pp.247-8.

91. Marvin Feuerwerker, Congress and Israel 1969-1975, pp.3-4: "The constitution grants the President considerable authority to act without congressional direction in his roles as Commander-in-Chief and the sole US representative in relations with foreign governments".

92. Interview with H. Byroade, Washington, D.C.

93. Abba Eban, An Autobiography, pp.178-9. See also William B. Quandt, Camp David, p.13.

94. I.L. Kenen, Israel's Defense Line: Her Friends and Foes in Washington (Prometheus Books: New York 1981), pp.122-3.

95. Eban, op.cit., pp.172-3.

resistance to the idea of coming to terms with Israel",⁹⁶ and this was inconsistent with Israeli strategy to secure peace on the basis of the status quo.

The Gaza Raid

The Israeli government intensified its propaganda campaign, thus helping it to legitimise the policy of reprisals based on the theory that matters will have to be made worse before they become better. This policy led to the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip on 28 February 1955, two days after the signing of the Baghdad Pact, and ten days after Ben Gurion returned to the Israeli cabinet as defence minister.⁹⁷ The Israeli raid marked the end of the calm which had prevailed along the Egyptian-Israeli border.⁹⁸ This raid was the first direct clash between Egypt and Israel since 1948. On the Egyptian side thirty-six soldiers and two civilians were killed, and twenty-nine soldiers and two civilians were wounded.⁹⁹ A chain reaction of increasingly violent confrontations was initiated between the two countries, coming to a climax in the Suez war twenty-one months later. As one historian has observed, "With the Gaza raid the count-down to war began".¹⁰⁰

96. NA RG 59 Box 4083-780.00/2-2154, 21 December, memo. of conversation, M. Francois de Labdegys, Counsellor, French Embassy, Mr. Jernegan, NEA.

97. Michel Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, pp.216-7. To understand Ben Gurion's attitude towards the Arabs, see Francis Russell, Oral History, Dulles Oral History Collection, p.5, where Goldman says, "Ben Gurion felt that the only language that the Arabs understood was the language of toughness and that Israel for its future security would have to pursue a tough policy".

98. Shortly before the raid Nasser visited Gaza and told the troops that there was no danger of war, that the Gaza armistice demarcation line was not going to be a battle-front. Hamrush, Vol.5, p.22; see also NA RG 59 Box 2979, 647474.84A/10-75.4, Cairo to Department of State.

99. Burns, Between Arab and Israeli.

100. Donald Neff, Warriors at Suez, p.33.

Regardless of the reasons behind the Israeli adoption of a hard-line policy towards Egypt, the consequences of the raid were dangerous not only for Egyptian-Israeli relations, but also for the stability of the Middle East. The situation had been greatly complicated. Nasser, for one, must always have had in the back of his mind the possibility of being overthrown by the same sort of cabal of military officers who had previously overthrown Farouk. The humiliation of the Gaza raid made it difficult for him as a military man to pursue or enforce policies which were unpopular with the army.¹⁰¹ The murder of Abdullah, for example, was still fresh in his mind. More significantly, the raid had eliminated any possibility of having the two sides together at the bargaining table for any sort of settlement.

Baghdad Pact and the Raid

Nasser's humiliation in Gaza and the announcement of the Baghdad Pact led him to assume that there was pressure to force Egypt to participate in the Baghdad Pact under Western auspices. Egypt's rivalry with Iraq for leadership of the Arab world led Nasser to think that he must not appear weak, nor submit to any Israeli threat. Thus the timing of the Gaza raid, and not necessarily the Egyptian military defeat was the main factor behind Egypt's policy towards the Baghdad

101. Interview with Ambassador H. Byroade, Washington, D.C., 1983; D.D. Eisenhower Library, papers of J.F. Dulles, telephone call series, Box No.4, September 1955, memo. of telephone conversation with Mr. Hoover, 22 September 1955. Hoover told Dulles that Nasser was under extreme pressure within his own group, "especially after the Gaza raid".

Pact and Israel afterwards. Nasser felt that his emergence as one of the leading figures in the Arab world vis-a-vis Nuri el-Said would be seriously undermined if he showed a greater willingness to compromise after this destructive raid. This marked the inauguration of an Arab "Cold War" between Cairo and Baghdad which helped shape the history of the peace process between Egypt and Israel. The chain of events did not help Egypt to become a bridge for peace, as America had hoped, but rather a barrier against it for a long time. Nasser was now bent on using Arab unity under his leadership as leverage to gain more concessions from the West and Israel. As for the Americans, they believed that "the raid put an end to any hope for the steps towards peace".¹⁰²

With the Gaza raid Ben Gurion hoped that "If Israel were to strike back hard against Egyptian provocations, Egypt would be frightened off and curb its behaviour".¹⁰³ But the Eisenhower administration did not believe that Ben Gurion's reprisal policy was either right or efficacious. Therefore it did not remain passive against this military attack. The American delegation to the UN did not hesitate to condemn it in the Security Council¹⁰⁴ as "A violation of the cease-fire provision of the Security Council Resolution of July 15, 1948, and inconsistent with obligations of the parties under the General Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel and under the Charter".¹⁰⁵ Condemnation in the United

102. Princeton University, J. Dulles, Oral History Project, Francis Russell, pp.6-7.

103. Barzohar', op.cit., p.219.

104. Neff, op.cit., pp.46-7.

105. Burns, op.cit., p.21.

Nations, however, did not reduce the explosive tension that was building up in the area. Secretary Dulles suggested to President Eisenhower that "If there were aggression in the area, we should take action both within and without the UN to stop the aggression".¹⁰⁶

The firm American stand against this kind of reprisal policy was inspired by a number of factors, including Nasser's alliance with Saudi Arabia whose oil was so important to American military needs.¹⁰⁷

No doubt too this kind of Israeli reprisal would have lessened to some extent the Arabs' interests in Western defence schemes, thus

undermining American cold-war strategy. In general, the Gaza raid and Israeli military policy diminished Arab receptivity to the idea of co-operating in a Western defence system directed against the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁸

The raid ended Western hopes generally for better relations between Egypt and Israel. More particularly, it ended American hopes that Egypt would become the first Arab state to make peace with Israel.

In retrospect the sequence of events touched off by the Gaza raid does in fact seem to have driven a wedge between Egypt and the United States. It marked the end of the honeymoon between the two countries.¹⁰⁹ This can be understood in Ambassador Badeau's comment when he wrote in

106. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Diary series, Box No.9, telephone calls January-July 1955(2), Wednesday, 6 March 1955.

107. D.D. Eisenhower Library, series Box No.4, staff notes, bi-partisan, legislative meeting, 5 January 1955; Rubin, Paved with Good Intention p.75.

108. W. Perkins Library, Allen Division, Durham, NC Box 1, p.15, from Dulles to George Allen, 26 July 1955; Meyer, op.cit., p.77.

109. NA RG 84 Box 2-350, from American Embassy, Cairo, to Department of State, 23 September 1955. In Nasser interview with Cedric Foster, he said, "The behaviour of Israel was standing obstruction between United States and the Arab world".

1965 that "The day of honey in Arab-American relations so easily changed into a day of onion",¹¹⁰ whether or not this was Israel's real intention.¹¹¹

Later, tension still prevailed on the Egyptian-Israeli borders. Israeli threats strengthened the Egyptian leaders' determination to get arms to "defend Egypt frontier",¹¹² especially when it became known that Israel had been securing arms from France, Britain and even the United States¹¹³ despite those three countries' commitments to the 1950 Tripartite Declaration. Soon the Egyptian leadership also intensified its campaign to get arms from the United States. Byroade, the new American ambassador, was bombarded with such demands. Nasser said that only new arms supplies for Egypt could forestall army and popular support for retaliation. Nasser's CIA contacts took up his cause, but despite the sympathy of Allen Dulles, the CIA chief, no help was obtained.¹¹⁴

On the spot, Byroade, a former military man, saw the dangers to the existing conditions. In April the Soviet Union was offering "to help any Middle East country not already aligned with the West".¹¹⁵

110. John Badeau, *Foreign Affairs*, 43, January 1965, "USA and UAR, crisis in confidence", p.283 - an Egyptian saying.

111. D.D. Eisenhower Library, papers of J.F. Dulles, White House, memo. chronological sub-series, meeting with the President, memo. of conversation, 5 June 1955: Dulles, "I told the President that there was some evidence that the Israelis might move to take over the whole of this strip [Gaza] driving out the Egyptians". On 1 September 1955, Dulles told Eisenhower that "Today's trouble spot is Gaza Strip. I hope, however, that it will not lead to full-scale war".

112. *The Times*, 3 March 1955, Nasser's speech.

113. "Jamal Abd al-Nasir", *Khutab wa tasrihat al-ra'is Jamal 1952-1959*, Vol.5, 2 October 1955, pp.10004-10111; also Hamrush, Vol.5, pp.23-4.

114. Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, pp.136-8; also Mohamed Heikal, *Nasser the Cairo Documents*, p.56; D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers (Ann Whitman file), legislative leaders meetings 1956(4), 9 November 1956, Allen Dulles (see also D.D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.3, 27 October 1954, telephone call to Mr. A.W. Dulles).

115. D.D. Eisenhower Library, legislative meeting, 9 November 1956.

Nasser's frustration at not getting arms from the West led him to tell Byroade and his British counterpart that "if they refused to supply him with arms he would try to get them from the Russians".¹¹⁶ Byroade was convinced that Nasser was not bluffing, so he told Dulles "Nothing would do us more good than to turn a squadron of B-26s over to the Egyptian air force".¹¹⁷ Allen Dulles' and Byroade's recommendation went unheeded because of Israeli pressure.¹¹⁸

In the spring of 1955 the Syrians accused Turkey, a member of NATO and the Baghdad Pact, of threatening their security. By then too¹¹⁹ Britain and the United States were reluctant to supply arms to Egypt outside the framework of Western defence pacts. Nasser and his colleagues assumed that the West was using Israel as a constant challenge to their leadership. The Western powers knew that if the Egyptians, faced with the choice of defeat by Israel or yielding to the West, would have to choose the latter.¹²⁰ Yet the Egyptian leadership did not exclude the possibility of keeping its relationship with the United States on good terms, and eventually getting arms from her. Before going to Bandung, Nasser did his utmost to see Dulles to discuss a matter of mutual interest,¹²¹ offering his readiness to use an American

116. Interview with Ambassador Byroade, Washington, D.C., 1983; Heikal, *Qissat al-Suwais*, p.74.

117. D.D. Eisenhower Library, J.F. Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.31, folder, telephone conversations, general, telephone call to Talbot, 27 April 1955.

118. *Ibid.*

119. At this time there was a military alliance between Syria and Egypt, see Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, pp.233-4.

120. Salah Salem, to Seale, *ibid.*, pp.234-5. Ali Sabri repeated the same words to the author in Cairo, 29 January 1985.

121. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles papers, Box No.96, Nasser Gamal 1955, Dear Mr. Kermit, 28 February 1955.

plane to avoid visiting India on his way to Bandung, since Nehru was making tremendous efforts to line up the Middle East with his neutralist bloc. "In Nasser's view this would cancel his trip with Nehru and underline his real feeling of kinship with the West";¹²² but it was all in vain since no Egyptian inducement could change American strategy based on the assumption that all Arab countries, especially Egypt should be maintained only as defensive powers and not as offensive ones.¹²³ This American position had been formulated ever since the establishment of Israel.¹²⁴

122. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles papers, Box 96, Nasser to Dulles, 28 March 1955.

123. NA RG 59 Box 4042 780.54MSP/9-453, to Secretary, memo. of conversation, subject, foreign aid. Regarding the Arab states, Dulles said "He felt the primary purpose of our military assistance to the area was to maintain internal stability" And after the 1954 Agreement, Allen Dulles in a conversation with his brother, John, about arms aid to Egypt, said, "We might try to keep it on a very defensive basis", Dulles telephone call series, 27 October 1954, conversation with Allen Dulles.

124. The executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VIII 84, Congress, second session 1956: situation the Middle East, statement of Hoover, 27 February 1956.

US arms exports, 1950-1955 (these are figures from 25 May 1950 to December 1955), pp.84-6.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Arms</u>	<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Total</u>
Egypt	\$1,263,100	Commercial, spare parts	\$6,501,000
Israel	\$7,800,100	Aircraft only \$21million	\$28million (p.86)
Arab states bordering on Israel	\$3million	\$12million	\$15million (p.91)

The Arms Deal

At Bandung Abdel Nasser met Zhou Enlai,¹²⁵ where he had reportedly put forward the idea to him of securing Chinese arms for Egypt. Because of China's own dependence on Soviet sources, Zhou agreed to relay the Egyptian request to the Soviet authorities. According to Salah Salem, the Soviet ambassador in Cairo conveyed a positive response to them on 6 May 1955.¹²⁶ Nasser nevertheless continued to press for American arms. This can be attributed to his eagerness to avoid a further rift in relations with the United States, while also taking into consideration that the Egyptian army was accustomed to Western arms. A certain wariness by Nasser on the political implications of arms purchases from the Eastern bloc was no doubt another consideration.

Events now moved quickly towards their climax. Nasser decided to make a last attempt to secure American arms. Ambassador Byroade recounts the sequence of events as follows:

I met Nasser at the beginning of June and he told me frankly that if Dulles continued to refuse to supply them with weapons, they would get arms from the Soviet Union. I cabled the State Department on the same night to come to terms with Egypt to forestall such possible agreement.¹²⁷

Dulles, however, did not take the matter seriously, convinced that Nasser was bluffing and trying to blackmail them.¹²⁸ Soon events were to prove him wrong.

125. NA RG 59 Box 2851 670-901/12-2354, from Djakarta to Secretary of State, 28 December 1954, secret; before Gaza raid Egypt opposed strongly the Chinese participation in the conference and sided with Iraq and Pakistan on this issue.

126. Seale, *op.cit.*, pp.236-7; al-Baghdadai, *Mudhakkirat*, Vol.II, p.202.

127. Interview with Ambassador Byroade, Washington, D.C., 1984.

128. *Ibid.*; also interview with Kermit Roosevelt, Washington, 15 May 1984.

At the end of July Nasser gave a positive reply to the Soviets.¹²⁹ Simultaneously he did not "show or repeat to the United States officials any official proposals from the Soviet representative for such free aid".¹³⁰ Dulles claimed that he got wind of the deal in June 1955.¹³¹ On 15 August, the CIA chief and his representative in Cairo received information from a reliable Egyptian source that the arms deal was finalised.¹³² Whether or not the Egyptian authorities leaked this top secret information in June or August to the Americans in order to attract American military aid in terms which they felt compatible with their own interests, is not clear. Byroade, in any case, who was well aware of the dangers of such a deal, suggested on 15 August that the United States should show sympathetic interest in the High Dam project, and make "arrangements to sell military equipment on generous terms directly to Egypt for local currency".¹³³

All indications showed that Soviet prestige in Egypt was on the rise, while American influence had started to wane.¹³⁴ All of these new circumstances went unheeded. Dulles' only response was to attempt to infuse new life into an Arab-Israeli peace project.¹³⁵ Dulles' peace plan at this critical time demonstrated a naiveté by the Eisenhower

129. CIA papers, NA 774-56/52555, from O.R. Philip to F. Shethoux, 6 September 1955.

130. Ibid., pp.4-5.

131. John Foster Dulles before the Congress, US Congress Hearings, p.16.

132. CIA papers, NA 774-56/52555: on 15 August Ahmed Husayn, the Egyptian ambassador in Washington, reported to Byroade his conversation with Nasser about the arms deal with the Soviet Union.

133. NA RG 218 09/CJCS, Chairman, Staff Group, the Joint Chief of Staff, memo. for Admiral Radford, subject, Egyptian situation, 8 August 1955.

134. Ibid.

135. Department of State Bulletin, No.845, 5 September 1955, Dulles advocating an Arab-Israeli settlement in speech before the Committee for Foreign Relations, 26 August 1955, in New York.

administration in discounting the possibility that any regional leader, especially Nasser, would dare confront the West with an agreement such as that which Egypt concluded over arms with the Soviet Union. Dulles' miscalculation on regional developments in the Middle East stemmed mainly from his disagreement with the American representative in Cairo on the issue of American policy towards Egypt. For Dulles, Henry Byroade's reports reflected Nasser's view, not the American one.¹³⁶ Consequently, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff blamed the State Department and Dulles for the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal.¹³⁷ Although Dulles did his utmost to prevent the deal going through, either by threatening Nasser or through persuasion,¹³⁸ on 27 September 1955 Nasser made the facts public, thus putting an accomplished fact before the American administration.

Dulles, in his telephone conversation with the American Vice-President Richard Nixon, considered it "as dangerous as the loss of China".¹³⁹ Dulles' frustration led him to become vengeful and, on 27 September he proposed some highly unorthodox action against Egypt. "We have a lot of cards to play with Nasser", he declared, "although they are mostly negative. The waters of the upper Nile: we can

136. Heikal, *Nahnu wa Amrika*, p.87; interviews with Ambassador Byroade, and Mr. K. Roosevelt.

137. RG 218-091, Egypt, Chairman's Staff Group, the Joint Chief of Staff, memo. for Admiral Radford, subject, Egyptian situation, 26 September 1955.

138. Al-Baghdadi, *op.cit.*, Vol.1, pp.205-6; interview with Mr. K. Roosevelt; also Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, *op.cit.*, pp.60-1.

139. D.D. Eisenhower Library, *papers of J.F. Dulles*, telephone calls series, Box No.4, telephone conversation general, memo. of telephone conversation with the Vice-President, 17 October 1955.

strangle him if we want to, we can develop the Baghdad group, and we can ruin the cotton market; we can switch this year's economic aid from Egypt to Iraq".¹⁴⁰

It was now clear to the Americans that the central issue was that of the great gains the Soviet Union had made in the area, not one of how to subvert Nasser's influence.¹⁴¹ As a result, Dulles suggested that the United States, Britain and France should protest to the Soviet Union.¹⁴² In his meeting with the Soviet foreign minister Dulles tried very hard to justify the American move. He pointed out to Molotov that because of the arms deal, "the risk of war between Israel and the Arabs has increased".¹⁴³ President Eisenhower reiterated the same position in his message to the Soviet leader Bulganin. Furthermore, he warned the Soviet Union that the arms deal "...will not promote the goals which I hope we have in common...a relaxation of tension between us".¹⁴⁴ In this context the arms deal transformed the Middle East from an area of parochial conflict between the Arabs and Israel, into an arena of super-power competition.

140. D.D. Eisenhower Library, *op.cit.*, telephone call to Mr. Hoover in Washington, 27 September 1955. Also see Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, pp.60-1.

141. D.D. Eisenhower Library, J.F. Dulles papers, *ibid.* The American policy-makers understood very well the main reason which led Nasser to deal with the Soviets, and that in H. Hoover's point of view, "Nasser was under extreme pressure within his own group and was doing a lot of things to stay off being thrown out", telephone call series, memo. of telephone conversation with Mr. Hoover, ** 22 September 1955.

142. D.D. Eisenhower Library, J.F. Dulles papers, general correspondence and memo. Box No.1, memo. of conversation with Sir Piers Dixon, New York, September 1955.

143. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Dulles series Box No.4, memo. of conversation, top secret, 31 October 1955.

144. D.D. Eisenhower Library, White House, Office of Staff Secretary, Box No.1, Folder No.1, State Department, 11 October 1955, secret.

The arms deal proved that the American concept of "deterrence" was short-sighted. The possibility that a local power would invite the Soviet Union to intervene was not taken into consideration by American strategists. Moreover, the deal enabled the Soviet Union to — "leap over the northern tier of defence which would lead to an increase of Soviet influence in Egypt and perhaps a further expansion throughout the area".¹⁴⁵ It represented a major challenge to Western policy-makers, especially American ones. Now the Soviets for the first time since 1946, were participants in Middle Eastern politics,¹⁴⁶ proving their ability to exploit any favourable circumstance, and, as it were, "fish in muddy waters". The Soviet Union was lending its weight to some Arab regimes which became known as "progressive", thus countering the "reactionary" Arab regimes supported by Britain and America.

As for Egypt, the arms deal enabled her to strengthen her position in the Arab world while at the same time Nasser's popularity and prestige in Arab political circles allowed him to assume the role of the defiant hero, in contrast to the Iraqi leadership which had bowed to Western demands.¹⁴⁷ Nasser's policies were now hailed throughout the Arab world. The Council of the Arab League supported Nasser's firm stand in buying arms from communist countries. The Saudi Arabian ambassador in the Arab League told reporters that he saw "no reason why all other

145. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, International series, Box 41, Folder 2, Saudi Arabia, private conversation between King Saud and Eisenhower in January 1957. In 1955 the Soviets offered to supply Saudi Arabia with arms and also a training team "to bring [the Saudi force] to a good state of readiness". They did the same thing with Israel. See Eisenhower, Waging Peace, p.25. See also Eisenhower papers, Ann Whitman file, cabinet series Box No.5, folder 30 September 1956. Dulles reported that Russia might also supply some African countries with weapons.

146. B. Lewis, "The Middle Eastern reaction to Soviet pressure", The Middle East Journal, Vol.10, spring 1956, No.2, p.136.

147. Interview with Mr. Patrick Seale, London.

Arab states should not follow Egypt's example".¹⁴⁸ The Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian Chambers of Deputies voted a resolution of congratulations to Nasser. Even Nuri el-Said felt constrained to send a message of congratulations and approval to his rival.¹⁴⁹ This wide support by the Arab community for the arms deal demonstrated the new political reality that Egypt, under Nasser and his young enroute, would become the new protagonists of the Arab world, not Iraq under Nuri el-Said and the old politicians. Nasser's acceptance of the Russian offer carried no risk to his personal safety nor to his political popularity. On the contrary, it strengthened his role as the legitimate leader of the Arab world.

Dulles had reluctantly accepted the arms deal and its consequences, thus inducing him to moderate his tone of animosity towards Nasser. On 4 October 1955, he coolly said at a press conference that Egypt could hardly be blamed for buying weapons: "It is difficult to be critical of countries which, feeling themselves endangered, seek the arms which they sincerely believe they need for defence".¹⁵⁰ The American policy-makers began to realise that it would be better for them to draw Egypt closer to them rather than alienate her.¹⁵¹ Any further pressure might force Egypt to oppose any American peace plan in the Middle East.¹⁵² Also further American opposition could be strategically counter-productive, because Egypt had informed the United States that it had received a

148. New York Times, 2 October 1955, p.7, "Arab League takes stand".

149. B. Lewis, The Middle East and the West, p.132.

150. Department of State Bulletin, 17 October 1955, transcript of Dulles press conference release on 4 October 1955.

151. Neff. op.cit., p.104.

152. Alpha plan, see Dulles speech on 26 August 1955, Department of State Bulletin, March 1956.

Soviet offer to finance the Aswan Dam.¹⁵³ American overestimation of Nasser's influence on some Arab countries on the other hand, led them to suppose that other Arab states - e.g., Saudi Arabia and Syria - would follow Egypt's lead in obtaining arms from the Eastern bloc, thus undermining Western Middle East defence.¹⁵⁴ American policy-makers were convinced that Egypt could become the political prototype emulated by other Arab countries. Since America chose to support Nasser's regime, its strategy rested on the assumption that Soviet penetration could be contained and the Arab-Israeli dispute resolved.

Despite the establishment of Soviet-Egyptian relations,¹⁵⁵ Egypt continued to demonstrate its willingness to improve its bilateral relations with America. Egypt's diplomacy was aimed at mitigating American disappointment at Egypt's arms deal with the Eastern bloc. The Egyptians were keen to deny that because of the arms deal, Egypt "is going to open the door to Soviet penetration in the Middle East". A highly-placed Egyptian source confirmed to reporters that "No nation has been more anti-communist than Egypt under this regime".¹⁵⁶

The Egyptian attitude was motivated by a desire to avoid Mossedegh's mistake in Iran, of trying to improve his relations with the Soviet Union in order to force the United States to adopt a friendlier line of policy. On the contrary, such tactics could only antagonise Washington.¹⁵⁷

153. *New York Times*, 14 and 18 October 1955; also Neff, *op.cit.*, p.125.

154. NA RG 218-091 Egypt 1959, August 1956, the JCS, 20 October 1956, memo. for Chairman of JCS, subject, Intelligence brief regarding Egypt-Israel situation.

155. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Draper Committee Box No.20, Sino-Soviet bloc and free world, the development of Sino-Soviet activities in Egypt from 1954 to 1955. At the conclusion of its report the Committee mentioned that the bloc's activities were concentrated in a few countries such as Syria, Egypt and Afghanistan.

156. *New York Times*, 30 September 1955, "Cairo statement", and 4 October 1955.

157. For American-Iranian relations, see B. Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions, p.83.

Egypt, that is, tried to avoid the point of no return in its relations with the United States. American friendship was important, especially during the Nasser-Nuri rivalry for Arab leadership. Trying to obtain American neutrality in regional conflicts was vital since that might help Egypt maintain its leadership over the other Arab countries. Nasser was also trying to consolidate American economic assistance to build the Aswan Dam, which had become the cornerstone of Egypt's ten-year economic plan. Egyptian policy-makers thus tried very hard to avoid total dependence upon the support of one bloc, as this would put an end to their ability to manoeuvre between the two blocs, and thus achieving their ends more easily.

Dulles' Peace Initiative

A few days before the Gaza raid, the United States behind the scenes began to change its piecemeal methods of promoting an Arab-Israeli settlement into a more comprehensive and dynamic approach to the problem. According to the recently declassified American documents, Francis Russell, who was working at the American embassy in Tel Aviv, was appointed special assistant to Secretary Dulles to work on plans to improve Arab-Israeli relations. Russell, moreover, collaborated with British officials in preparing comprehensive proposals to overcome the dispute.¹⁵⁸

158. D.D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Alpha-to Secretary from F. Russell, 14 February 1953, and also see Francis Russell to Hoover, subject, Present status of efforts to secure Israel-Arab settlement, top secret.

The sequence of events touched off by the Gaza raid encouraged American policy-makers to move in reducing actively the explosive tensions that were building up in the area. In May 1955, a few weeks after the Bandung conference, Henry Byroade, the American ambassador in Cairo, approached Nasser in order to convince him to accept a new American comprehensive peace initiative.¹⁵⁹ Nasser voiced a willingness to compromise, and Secretary Dulles informed Eisenhower that "Nasser seems more friendly and more sympathetic to such a project".¹⁶⁰ Nasser was still hoping to get American military aid while the State Department thought that a comprehensive peace plan would weaken Egyptian demands at such a critical phase in Middle Eastern politics. But the American initiative was launched in May 1955 at a time when Israel's bargaining position was strong and improving, while the Egyptians were temporarily weak especially after the Gaza raid and before the arms deal. Egyptian-Israeli relations by this time had deteriorated, and tension prevailed along the Egyptian-Israeli border. Rumours had spread that the Russians were offering armaments to Egypt. Dulles thought that if the Russians began to get into the scene, particularly in Egypt, the USA should do something.¹⁶¹

The American leadership did not remain passive in the face of this development. Consequently Dulles revealed the American peace initiative

159. D.D. Eisenhower Library, J.F. Dulles papers, memo. series, chronological sub-series, Box 3: meeting with President 1955, special assistant to Secretary, 6 May, memo. for the Secretary, re. Alpha Plan, top secret.

160. D.D. Eisenhower Library, J.F. Dulles papers, White House, memo. series, Box No.3, White House, Correspondence G 1955(1), memo. from Dulles to President, top secret (Alpha).

161. D.D. Eisenhower Library, J.F. Dulles papers, telephone call series, general, 2 May 1955-31 August 1955(2), telephone call to Eric Johnston, 18 August 1955.

which was considered one of the most comprehensive peace plans of the 1950s.¹⁶² In a speech on 26 August 1955 to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Dulles noted the need to deal with three problems: the refugee issue, "the pall of fear", and the lack of "fixed permanent boundaries", and suggested that they seemed capable of a solution. He proposed a multi-faceted approach to resettlement and re-partition involving the creation of additional land. To facilitate the efforts and projects for the development of water resources, United States funds would be set aside and an international loan would be provided enabling Israel to pay compensation to the refugees. To promote security and to alleviate the fear prevalent in the region, the United States would join in formal treaty arrangements to help guarantee and preserve the permanent borders between Israel and its neighbours, replacing the 1949 armistice lines.¹⁶³

Al-Gomhouria, the semi-official Egyptian newspaper, saw Mr. Dulles' proposals as a pressing desire for completing the Middle East defence organisation since these proposals denied Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. It wondered "Who has the right to decide to simply on the refugees' rights and the fate of a million homeless Arabs, on the question of border adjustments, and the future status of Jerusalem". The newspaper emphasised the fact that existing resolutions by the United Nations on the issue, though firm and obvious, had not been respected by Israel.¹⁶⁴ Mohamed Haikal reported that Nasser found the

162. Touval, *op.cit.*, pp.115-9; Meyer, *op.cit.*, p.79.

163. Department of State Bulletin, 30 October 1955. See also, Dulles Oral History Collection, F. Russell, pp.6-7.

164. Al-Gomhouria, 27 August 1955.

Americans "too concerned with superficial and artificial ways of settling problems", and that he could not take these "gimmicks" seriously.¹⁶⁵ Ben Gurion, for his part, flatly opposed Dulles's proposals for drawing permanent boundaries to replace the armistice lines.¹⁶⁶

As usual, it is a combination of causes rather than a single cause that can explain the failure of the American initiative. Dulles' speech was made on 26 August 1955 when Egypt was about to finalise its arms deal with the Soviet Union, and it believed that its bargaining position had been strengthened. Thus the timing was a crucial factor behind Egypt's reluctance to accept the American proposals. Nasser believed his bargaining position vis-a-vis Israel was improving because of the promised Soviet arms deal. It was difficult for Nasser to sacrifice his position in the Arab world vis-a-vis Nuri el-Said in the throes of an Arab cold war. The Arabs had come to look upon Nasser as a symbol of unity and independence. He could not yield to American pressure, and openly accept a resolution offering less than that of the November 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution.¹⁶⁷ He would have undermined his image in the Arab world. His position had been strengthened, especially after the Gaza raid and the Bandung conference and Egypt's Arab campaign against the Baghdad Pact and Nuri el-Said.¹⁶⁸

165. Heikal, Cairo Documents, p.65.

166. New York Times, 29 August 1955, "Ben Gurion firm on frontier".

167. The Times, 29 December 1954 ("No peace with Israel"). Salah Salem declared "Egypt would not make peace with Israel even if Israel agreed to execute the United Nations resolution on partition and refugees". Nuri el-Said admitted to Ambassador Gallman that over 95 per cent of the Iraqi population saw Israel as the enemy rather than the USSR. Quoted in Gallmann, Iraq under General Nuri, p.27.

168. NA Intelligence Report No.7042, 12 September 1955, Mainspring of Egyptian foreign policy.

Moreover, Nasser's understanding of the mentality of the ordinary Arab prevented him from siding with the United States. He was conscious of the attitudes of Arabs towards the American peace initiative, and he did not want to undermine his own popularity and his ability to whip up their support for his plans regarding Egypt's leadership of the Arab world. The Palestine cause was a taboo subject for most of the Arab leaders who did not dare to handle it probably because of their fears of adverse reactions from their people. Most of them preferred to be mere passive spectators, rather than experience any setback in their popularity and prestige.

The failure of the American peace offer can also be attributed to the decline of American motivation. The American initiative was part of a comprehensive effort to limit Soviet influence and test Nasser's claim that he wanted to preserve American friendship. Peace however desirable was not a goal for its own sake. Finally, the unacceptability of the initiative to both Arabs and Israelis was a decisive factor behind the failure of the American offer. The United States did not have the power to force a solution on either side and, as Campbell said, "Any hope of an agreement between the two seemed quite vain".¹⁶⁹

The apparent failure did not stop American attempts to reduce the tension between the two sides. American policy-makers realised that the question of boundaries was one of the most delicate aspects of the whole issue,¹⁷⁰ and they began to co-ordinate their policies with the

169. Campbell, Defense of the Middle East, pp.88-9.

170. Interview with Ambassador H. Byroade.

British on this issue.¹⁷¹ After the Israeli occupation of the demilitarised zone at el-Auja in November 1955, Anthony Eden, the British prime minister, suggested that the Arab-Israeli side must compromise between the borders established by the 1947 Partition plan and the larger boundary claimed by the right of conquest by Israel in the 1949 armistice lines.¹⁷² But these comprehensive proposals could only succeed if the belligerents themselves reached an agreement on the whole issue.¹⁷³ Nasser reacted positively, describing Eden's proposal as a "constructive attitude",¹⁷⁴ while Israel held the opposite view.¹⁷⁵ In general, though, Eden's speech met with the same reaction as Dulles' speech concerning his peace plan, and for almost the same reasons.

Israel's negative response to Eden's proposals led the American policy-makers to move from the level of overt diplomacy to a covert one on the grounds that the CIA could probably help to win greater co-operation and confidence. It seemed at that time that Egypt and especially Israel felt that the CIA met their interests with a greater understanding than the State Department.¹⁷⁶ Using the CIA, Dulles tried unofficially, though in vain, to persuade Ben-Gurion

171. NSC Report No.5428, 2 November 1955, p.1.

172. The British may have been motivated by their eagerness for American participation in the Baghdad Pact, since the Americans pointed that their "adherence depended upon a relaxation in the Arab-Israeli tension". See NSC Progress Report on the Near East (5428), 2 November 1955, top secret, p.2.

173. Meyer, *op.cit.*, p.80.

174. Donald Neff, *op.cit.*, pp.115-6.

175. Touval, *op.cit.*, p.122.

176. Allen Dulles pointed out to his brother, John Foster Dulles, that his man "has more influence with Ben-Gurion than almost anyone around". See Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.4, 1 September 1955 to 30 December 1955, 23 December, telephone call from A.W. Dulles; Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, *op.cit.*; interview with Ambassador Ahmad Husayn, Cairo; interview with Kermit Roosevelt; see also Touval, *op.cit.*, pp.130-1.

that the only possible settlement is one along the lines of the British proposal.¹⁷⁷ In other words, the Anglo-American proposals did not improve the situation.

Anderson's Mission

Failure soon prompted the Americans to change their political tactics in handling the issue. They moved in two directions. They decided to use Egypt's eagerness and Nasser's personal willingness to maintain hegemony over the Arab countries by supporting Egyptian demands in limiting the Baghdad Pact to its present Arab membership.¹⁷⁸ This, they thought, would be a concession to avoid any Egyptian disagreement with the American peace efforts in the region. Suddenly, the Americans changed their view. They now believed that the Egyptian brand of neutralism, coupled with Egypt's ability to unite the forces of Arab nationalism against Western influence in the region, did not pose a threat to American or, for that matter, Western interests in the area.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the Americans began to think that efforts should be made to draw Egypt and Iraq together, and attempts should be made to "associate the Arab states under Egyptian leadership".¹⁸⁰ By November 1955, the Americans renewed their interest in the High Dam project.¹⁸¹ It was argued in the United States that if Egypt committed its economic resources

177. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, telephone call series, Box 4, telephone from Allen Dulles to John Foster Dulles, 23 December 1955.

178. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, White House memo series, Box 4, folder, meetings with the President, 12 January 1956.

179. Meyer, *op.cit.*, p.125.

180. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, international series Box 20, Eden visit, recommended United States' talking points, 1 February 1956.

181. Dulles oral history collection, Eugene Black, p.3.

to this project, for example, it would be less able to buy additional arms from the Eastern bloc. "Egypt's resources are insufficient for both guns and butter."¹⁸² Dulles, at the insistence of his deputy Hoover, decided to join the British and the World Bank in financing the Dam and link the offer to the covert attempt at finding a final solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁸³ Hoover and Dulles, that is, tried to buy peace with the Dam,¹⁸⁴ thinking that the latter could be used as an inducement to gain the co-operation of Nasser. Their assumption was that by strengthening Nasser's prestige in the Arab world and helping him to consolidate his political power in Egypt vis-a-vis his opponents, they would induce him to co-operate or at least not to interfere with United States policy in the area. Dulles, at least, insisted on giving Nasser a sort of probation period.¹⁸⁵

Subsequently American hopes were placed on the mission of Robert Anderson, a former Secretary of the Navy and a personal friend of President Eisenhower.¹⁸⁶ It was the last American opportunity to bring

182. Executive session of the Senate F. Committee, Vol. VIII 84, Congress 12 November 1956, p.618, Allen Dulles.

183. Dwight D. Eisenhower, papers of John Foster Dulles, telephone call series Box No.11, telephone call, memo. Secretary - Hoover to President, "I said that I was going to recommend that Bob Anderson should go to Cairo within about the next week after we had cleared our own position on the Aswan Dam in order to try our best to arrive at understanding with Nasser"; see also White House of Staff Secretary, subject, series alphabetical CIA volume, February 1955, memo. of record, 28 November 1955.

184. Interview with H. Byroade with K. Roosevelt, Executive session of the Foreign Committee, Vol VII 84 Congress, Report on the Aswan Dam by Hoover, 17 January 1956, p.56.

185. Interview with H. Byroade, see also Herzog Yaacov, John Foster Dulles, Oral History Project, pp.15-6.

186. The American leadership gave too much attention to this kind of peace mission, and Eisenhower suggested sending his brother Milton instead of Bob Anderson. See Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, telephone call series, Box No.11, memo. to Secretary from Hoover, 28 November 1955.

about an Egyptian-Israeli agreement before a greater conflict could erupt over the Suez crisis. In January 1956, eighteen years before Kissinger, Anderson shuttled between Cairo and Tel Aviv.¹⁸⁷ Despite the optimism of Anderson and Dulles, his mission was a failure.¹⁸⁸ Ben-Gurion, the Israeli prime minister, insisted on a face-to-face meeting with Nasser, while the latter feared any direct talks because this might lead to his overthrow or assassination.¹⁸⁹ Nasser valued his life on the basis of the experience of King Abdullah of Jordan. Ben-Gurion's determination to have direct talks with Nasser was motivated by "his lack of confidence in Nasser's intentions".¹⁹⁰ And despite Dulles' personal assurance to him in January 1956 that "the maintenance of the State of Israel in all essentials is a definite part of our policy; that our present objective is to deter Egyptians".¹⁹¹ Ben-Gurion was intransigent and American peace efforts collapsed.

Whatever the reasons behind the failure of Anderson's mission and the proper assignment of responsibility for its failure, what concerns us here is its impact upon American-Egyptian relations from March 1956 onward. The turning-point came in mid-March when Anderson returned from his mission in the Middle East, reporting directly to Eisenhower, Hoover

187. Eisenhower Diary Series, Box No.9, Folder 2, Diary, 11 January 1956.

188. Barry Rubin, The Arab States and the Palestine Conflict, p.229. See also Eisenhower papers international series, Box No.8, Folder 1, Egypt, 27 February 1956, from Eisenhower to Colonel G. Abdel Nasser, 27 February 1956.

189. Ben-Gurion, My Talks with Arab Leaders, pp.294-325; Russell Francis, Oral History, p.16; interview with Henry Byroade.

190. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Eisenhower papers, international series, Box 29, Israel, 20 February 1956, from acting Secretary of State, for the President, 20 February 1956.

191. Dwight D. Eisenhower, papers of John Foster Dulless, telephone call series, Box No.11, memo. of telephone conversation with White House, 25 January 1956.

and Allen Dulles. He proposed some highly irregular responses to Nasser's intransigence considering him "a man who does not react in the normal sense to pressures by one government against another". "Nasser's great concern", he added, "is to win popularity with the Egyptians", and he recommended that the United States "undertake an economic survey in the area completely devoid of Israeli or Jordanian water question, but make it clear we are not depending on his leadership".¹⁹² He also suggested to Eisenhower that the United States should "give attention to methods of splitting the Saudis away from the Egyptians and obtaining closer relations with Libya".¹⁹³

Anderson's recommendations did not go unheeded, and Eisenhower's administration had to find a new strategy since it was painfully clear that Arab-Israeli conciliations would not unite the area against the Russians,¹⁹⁴ while Nasser's leadership would not serve American interests in the area, on the contrary it would undermine it. As the administration's frustration increased personal resentment against Nasser also increased. Eisenhower thought that "...if we could get Libya and Saudi Arabia firmly in our camp...and at the same time we give Israel the necessary assurances, the possibility of trouble in the region would be greatly minimized if not practically eliminated".¹⁹⁵

192. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, telephone call series, Box No.5, telephone call from Allen Dulles, 4 April 1956.

193. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, White House, memo. series, Box No.4, meeting with the President, January 1956 through July 1956; memo. for the Secretary from Hoover, 16 March 1956, secret; memo. for the Secretary from Hoover, 12 March 1956, secret.

194. Steven L. Spiegel, *op.cit.*, pp.68-9.

195. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers as President, Dulles series, Box No.5, March 1956, from Eisenhower to Dulles, outgoing telegram, 10 March 1956.

The American leadership began to move towards three political strategies or aims. It tried very hard to form a competing anti-Nasser/Soviet camp under the banner of Saudi Arabia.¹⁹⁶ In seeking to limit Nasser's influence in the Arab world and to counter his activities in the area, Secretary Dulles suggested to Eisenhower that the United States should "encourage the United Kingdom to maintain its present treaty relationship with Jordan and help to prevent a situation in which a pro-Egyptian coup d'etat would succeed".¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, Dulles linked that with an increasing American support for the Baghdad Pact, "without actually adhering to the Pact or announcing our intention of doing so".¹⁹⁸ It was clear that the Eisenhower administration's real concern was to find a new strategy in the area, aiming to isolate Egypt "from the rest of the Arab world and with no ally except the Soviet Union". In Eisenhower's view that might lead her "to join us in a search for a decent peace".¹⁹⁹

196. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Diary series, Box No.9, Folder 1 1955, 28 March 1956, memo. for the Secretary of State, "Near Eastern policies", Eisenhower says, "We should begin to build up some other individual as a prospective leader of the Arab world. My own choice for such a role is King Saud". See also NA RG 59, CIA papers, personal and private, copy 1 by Allen Dulles, Allen Dulles' recommendations.

197. Eisenhower papers, Dulles, Herter series Box No.5, Dulles, March 1956, top secret, memo. from Dulles to Eisenhower. See also *ibid.*, memo. top secret, from the Secretary to the President, 28 March 1956, subject, Near Eastern policies.

198. *Ibid.*, memo. top secret, from the Secretary to the President, 28 March 1956. Ben-Gurion opposed strongly the American participation in the Baghdad Pact, see Dulles telephone conversation, telephone call to the President, 11 April 1956.

199. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Diary, Box No.9, Folder No.1, Diary, 8 March 1956.

Theoretically, the Eisenhower administration was aiming, according to Dulles, "to avoid any open break which would throw Nasser irrevocably into a Soviet satellite status and we would want to leave Nasser a bridge back to good relation to side with the West if he so desired".²⁰⁰ But practically Dulles' tough policy could hardly accomplish anything other than Nasser's alienation. Dulles was determined to show Nasser how tough he could be for, according to Dulles, Nasser should realise that "he cannot co-operate as he is doing with the Soviet Union and at the same time enjoy most-favoured nation treatment from the United States".²⁰¹ Dulles decided to co-ordinate his strategy with the United Kingdom in order to make a greater impression on Nasser. The item high on the list of actions to be taken against Nasser was a co-ordinated tactic by Washington and London to "continue to delay the conclusion of current negotiations on the High Aswan Dam". Other actions included "continued refusal to sell arms to Egypt, delays in granting grains and oil to Egypt, and elimination of the financial aid which amounted to \$40 million".²⁰²

Dulles' frustration and Nasser's stubbornness led the former to take unusual military and economic measures against Egypt. On the one hand from April 1956 onwards, Dulles was most actively and positively using his influence to see that Israel solved "its major defense

200. Eisenhower papers as President, Dulles Herter series, Box No.5, Folder Dulles March 1956, to the President from the Secretary of State, 28 March 1956, subject, Near Eastern policies.

201. Ibid., Box No.5, Folder Dulles, March 1956, from the Secretary of State to the President, 28 March 1956, subject, Near Eastern policies.

202. Ibid.

problems" by putting pressure on Ottawa and Paris to provide Israel with more arms.²⁰³ On the other hand, Dulles, as an international lawyer, began to study the legal aspects of imposing an arms embargo on Egypt.²⁰⁴

One, however, must look to a combination of causes rather than a single cause to explain these developments. One of these was the fact that the United States sought actively to maintain the military balance in Israel's favour,²⁰⁵ in order to deter Nasser from launching a war against Israel, especially after his arms deal with the Eastern bloc.²⁰⁶ In retrospect thought, by maintaining Israeli military superiority over the Arab states as a whole, America tried perhaps to alter the climate of fear and insecurity in Israel, which the latter had always used to justify its preventive attacks against Egypt and other Arab countries. The Americans chose therefore to maintain the status quo by ensuring the superiority of the Israeli side.

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203. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles, Oral History Project, Eban, pp.26-8. See Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.4, memo. of telephone call from Mr. Russell, Mr. Cassell. Secretary Dulles told Lester Pearson, the Canadian Prime Minister, that "we would be glad to see them sell some of the F86s to Israel". Also see Dulles Oral History, Herzog Yaacov, pp.17-8. For US pressure on France, see Eisenhower papers, international series, Box 8, Folder Egypt, White House communication from Goodpastor to Mrs. Whitman, 11 April 1956. Eisenhower in his diaries, said whether French should send to Israel "our position no objection", see 5 March 1956.
204. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.4, folder 3 January to April 1956, Monday, 9 April 1956, telephone call to Wilkins.
205. See Executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VIII, p.84. Congress second session statement by Admiral Radford, Chairman of JCS, 27 February 1956. Radford confirmed that "Israel equipment is the best in the area".
206. Eisenhower papers, Ann Whitman File NSC, Box No.7/276, the meeting of NSC, 10 February 1956, see p.3, Dulles' point of view. See also Cabinet series, Box No.6, 2 March 1956, Secretary Dulles, "the situation was complicated by the introduction of Soviet armaments which in few more months will make Egypt a threat to Israel".

Even before the failure of Anderson's mission, the United States had also tried to undermine the growth of the Egyptian economy, by selling its long-staple cotton at competitive prices in foreign markets,²⁰⁷ when cotton was Egypt's main export commodity. As a result of this policy, according to Dr. Fawzi, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, "the loss in cotton export which Egypt has already suffered due to United States cotton export subsidy was greater than the \$40 million of United States economic aid for Egypt".²⁰⁸ The Americans calculated that cotton exports represented 85 per cent of Egypt's total export earnings.²⁰⁹ American cotton policy therefore could have adverse political effects on United States relations with Egypt. Nevertheless, from February to May 1956,²¹⁰ the United States announced its intention "to bring economic pressures on Egypt"²¹¹ by flooding the world market with the American long-staple cotton regardless of its harmful effect upon Egypt's economy.

The High Dam

The failure of the Anderson mission also had serious implications for America's offer to help finance the construction of the Aswan Dam. In the autumn of 1955, Under-Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover, Jr., had linked the success of Anderson's mission to the Aswan Dam offer, and

207. Dwight D. Eisenhower, US Council on foreign economic policy records, 1954-1961, policy papers series, Box No.5, folder CFEP 529, US policy with respect to disposal of CCC-owned cotton (2), from Hoover to Secretary of Agriculture, 19 February 1956.

208. *Ibid.*, State Department position on cotton problem, to the President, 11 August 1955.

209. *Ibid.*

210. *Ibid.*, from Hoover to Secretary of Agriculture, 1 February 1956, Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.4, telephone call from Mr. Anderson, 28 February 1956; Eisenhower papers, confidential file 1953-1961 series, Box No.94, trade agriculture cotton, Department of Agriculture, office of the Secretary, Washington 14 March 1956, to the President; Dulles papers, telephone call series, telephone call from Francis Bolton, 10 May 1956.

211. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, telephone call series, Box No.5, folder memo. of telephone conversation, telephone call to Ambassador Lodge, 9 May 1956.

had consequently won the administration's approval for both projects on this basis.²¹² Although there was no particular link between the two projects, it was assumed that Nasser would understand that aid for the High Dam would strengthen his position at home and enable him to reach an agreement with Israel.²¹³ The Aswan Dam offer was thus proposed in mid-December, after obtaining British backing and World Bank support.²¹⁴ Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank, after two years of study, decided that "this was a good project to carry through".²¹⁵ All of this was neat and plausible, but trouble was bound to follow if Nasser did not play by the rules.²¹⁶

As soon as the offer was announced in late December 1955, Nasser objected to the terms despite the agreement of his negotiating team.²¹⁷ The Egyptian side wanted firm assurances of aid for the whole project and the abandonment of the separate first phase which had been suggested by the State Department when Congress objected to any long-term commitment.²¹⁸ The administration was at that time under a great deal of domestic pressure, and Nasser did not make its task any easier. By February 1956 it began to lose its enthusiasm for the Aswan

212. Interviews with H. Byroade and K. Roosevelt; see also Spiegel, *op.cit.*, pp.67-8; Dulles papers, White House memos. series, Box No.3, Folder meeting with President, Department of State, Sec. memo. of conversation participants: President, Secretary Humphrey, Dr. Snyder, Secretary Wilson, Secretary Dulles, 8 December 1955; Eisenhower papers, international file series, Box No.8, Folder 1, Egypt, memo. for the President, subject, status of the United States on the High Aswan Dam by Hoover (no date).

213. Love, *op.cit.*, pp.304-8.

214. Bryson Thomas, *American Diplomatic Relations*, p.190.

215. Princeton University, Dulles Oral History Collection, Eugene Black, p.3.

216. Spiegel, *op.cit.*, p.68; Neff, *op.cit.*, pp.130-3; Eugene Black, *op.cit.*, p.12.

217. Department of State Bulletin, 23 January 1956, transcript of Secretary Dulles, 11 January, Dulles new conference.

218. Executive session of Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VIII 1956, report on the Aswan Dam, 17 January 1956, pp.48-9; Mr. Hoover to members of the Committee, "I do not believe we are - we think it would be good business to go ahead with the second phase but we are not committed. We have no commitment of any sort toward phase 2 other than to look at it"; see also Dulles Oral History Collection, Henderson, Oral History, p.41, "Interview with Ambassador Ahmed Husayn.

Project.²¹⁹ But the turning-point came in mid-March, when Anderson returned from his mission to the Middle East empty-handed. The situation moreover brought complications for the Eisenhower administration in an election year. Its efforts to achieve peace or a modus vivendi between Egypt and Israel did not bear fruit. Its attempt to align the Arab countries against Russia did not succeed either, largely because of Nasser's resentment and opposition. To some extent, the administration began to yield to the pro-Baghdad Pact group that argued that Nasser was being rewarded for his recalcitrance on the Pact and his flirtation with Russia.²²⁰ There was also opposition from the group of "cotton senators" from the South who opposed the Dam because it would intensify competition with Egyptian cotton.²²¹ Finally, there was pressure from influential pro-Israeli groups who believed that the United States should withhold aid from Egypt as long as Egypt refused to make peace with Israel.²²² As a result the administration faced mounting congressional opposition to the project,²²³ while Dulles had only limited political influence on Capitol Hill, the Eisenhower was still

219. Thomas, op.cit., p.190.

220. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, telephone call series, Box 12, telephone call to Mr. Phleguin, San Francisco, 15 May 1957, Dulles, our northern allies like Pakistan, etc., complain that "we are doing too much for a neutral".

221. Executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VIII, 84 Congress, "Report on the Aswan Dam", 17 January 1956, p.46. Before the failure of Anderson's mission, Hoover did all he could to convince the "cotton senators" that the Egyptians "feel that they can get income per acre of about four times in fresh vegetables for European markets over what they can get in cotton".

222. Princeton University, Dulles Oral History Project, Abba Eban, pp.30-1.

223. Dulles-Herter series, Box No.6, Dulles, 2 September 1956, the Secretary to the President, "When I did it, the Congress would certainly have imposed it on us". Also see Box No.5, Dulles, July 1956, memo. of state to the President, subject: Limitation on use of mutual security funds, 16 July 1956.

recovering from his heart attack and preparing for his second presidential campaign.²²⁴

Historians debated whether Nasser's recognition of the People's Republic of China in mid-May 1956 cooled Dulles' approach to Egypt, and further added to Washington's disillusionment with the Egyptian regime.²²⁵ Egypt was the first nation to recognise China since the Korean war.²²⁶ The Egyptian leadership offered as an explanation the possibility of an arms embargo by Britain and the United States, and the Soviet Union's advice that, in recognising communist China, an alternative source for arms could be realised.²²⁷ Privately though, Dulles was not shocked because Israel and others had also recognised communist China.²²⁸ At one of his press conferences, Eisenhower pointed out that "a single action on the part of another nation does not of itself destroy a friendship for that nation".²²⁹

The Egyptian decision to recognise China, however, was in several ways significant for the Eisenhower administration. First, Nasser was challenging American efforts to put an end to the arms race in the area and to freeze the arms imbalance. Privately, Dulles suspected

224. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles, Oral History, Black, p.12.

225. Thomas, *op.cit.*, p.191; Spiegel, *op.cit.*, p.69; interview with Raymond Hare; also see Nutting, *op.cit.*, p.140.

226. Princeton University, Dulles papers, Box 113, news conference of 2 April 1957, No.184.

227. Mohamed Heikal, *Nasser the Cairo Documents*, p.66; also see Baghdadi, Vol.I, p.316. Baghdadi explained the main reasons behind Egypt's recognition of communist China after the Anglo-Soviet summit meeting in London on 26 April. They declared that "the governments of the two countries consider that effective measures should be undertaken for the prevention of an increase of tension in the Middle East area".

228. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.11, 23 May 1956, memo. of telephone conversation with Snyder.

229. Eisenhower papers, Ann Whitman file, press conference series, Box No.4, press conference, 23 May 1956.

Nasser did that because "the Egyptians do not feel confident that they can get arms indefinitely from the Russians".²³⁰ Nasser's recognition of China, however, undermined American attempts to curb communist bloc influence in the area which was an essential factor of America's global cold-war strategy, thus enabling the Soviet Union and China to bypass American military measures in the Near East. Egypt's recognition of Peking finally had created an impossible situation for the Eisenhower administration in Congress, especially vis-a-vis the conservative elements, headed by Senator Knowland.²³¹ Dulles therefore could not tolerate Nasser's recognition of China and his strategy of interference in power politics. For him it had been the last straw, and he finally decided to withdraw the offer of financial assistance for the Aswan Dam.

Before declaring his final decision, Dulles tried very hard to provoke Egyptian anger when, on 26 June before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Dulles declared, "I do not think that it is possible to build this Dam without a considerable sacrifice on the part of the Egyptian people whatever the Soviet offer may be. You will have to displace lots of people...I do not believe that a project of this magnitude can be undertaken without its imposing a considerable strain upon the economy of the country where it is done".²³² Dulles' statement was an indication that it was a matter of days before taking a firm stand over the project.

230. Dulles' telephone conversation with Mr. Jackson, 23 May 1956.

231. Interview with Ambassador Ahmad Husayn, Cairo, August 1983.

232. Executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VIII, 84 Congress, second session 1956, "Statement of Secretary Dulles", 26 June 1956.

One day before that, Secretary Dulles in a press conference gave an indication that the situation had been altered completely since the offer was made, declaring that "Those would have to be taken into account and will be taken into account in my talk with the Egyptian ambassador".²³³

Although Nasser accepted without haggling the American conditions to finance the project and it became clear that there was no longer any Egyptian obstacle to an agreement, on 19 July 1956 the Aswan Dam offer was reversed. Dulles tried very hard to justify the American decision.²³⁴ The State Department statement angered Nasser, and especially its accompanying slur on Egypt's economy, and hence on her creditworthiness.²³⁵ The emphasis in the administration's statement on friendship towards the people of Egypt, and the assertion that "The United States remains deeply interested in the welfare of the Egyptian people", sounded to Nasser suspiciously like a direct appeal to the Egyptians to get a new leader who might be better able to deal with the United States.²³⁶

All of this suggests that it was Dulles' personal decision to withdraw the Aswan Dam Fund,²³⁷ and that President Eisenhower had been

233. Department of State Bulletin, 30 July 1956, "Transcript of Secretary Dulles' news conference", 18 July 1956, p.185.

234. Department of State Bulletin, July 1956, p.188, "Aswan High Dam" release, 19 July 1956.

235. Nutting, *op.cit.*, p.141.

236. Neff, *op.cit.*; interview with Ali Sabri, Cairo.

237. Adams, Dulles Oral History, pp.23-5; Raymond Hare, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, pp.27-8; interviews with R. Hare, H. Byroade and K. Roosevelt; Eugene Black, Dulles Oral History Project, p.26.

guided by him.²³⁸ Neither the British nor the World Bank, as equal partners, had been consulted about this change of American plans.²³⁹ Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank, was shocked, giving as his opinion that Dulles "made a mistake in turning down this project".²⁴⁰

The abrupt manner with which Dulles revoked the American offer, however, reflected a new American approach towards Egypt. It marked the use of the big-stick tactic, designed to punish Nasser for his refusal to co-operate with the West. In the words of Eugene Black, "Mr. Dulles felt if he turned down the Aswan Dam project the USSR would not carry it through and if the Russians did not carry it through that Nasser would be in a tough spot. Because Aswan Dam was his magnum opus. This was the thing he had promised his people, so if he did not achieve it that meant the end of Nasser".²⁴¹

The manner of the American withdrawal of aid may be viewed as an act of political brinkmanship. Frequent reports, especially after Shepilov's visit to Egypt, convinced Dulles that "Shepilov did not have in his pocket any such offer Nasser was expecting".²⁴² This was

238. Anderson Dillon, Assistant to the President for the NSC, Dulles Oral History Project, p.38: "Mr. Dulles' strong voice in the NSC for it and the President agreed with him when he recommended it. Also see Adams, op.cit., p.25, "The President said, 'OK if that is your judgment, I think we'll have to tell them we're done'".

239. Aldrich, American Ambassador in London, said "He did not notify anybody in advance, in fact it came as a great shock to the British", see Dulles Oral History Project, p.12; Aldrich, "The Suez Crisis is a Footnote to History", Foreign Affairs, April 1967, p.541; see also Black, Oral History, p.23; Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles telephone call series, Box 5, folder memo. of telephone conversations, telephone call to Allen Dulles, 19 July 1956; Selwyn Lloyd, Suez: a Personal Account, pp.70-1, "Eden said that we had been informed, but not consulted".

240. Black, op.cit., pp.16 and 21.

241. Ibid., pp.16 and 28.

242. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, papers of John Foster Dulles, Box No.5, folder, memo. of telephone call to Allen Dulles, 27 June 1956.

confirmed by Shepilov's statement, the head of Pravda and subsequently foreign minister, that the USSR was not considering aid to Egypt for construction of the Dam.²⁴³ Dulles therefore believed in Egypt's readiness to accept the American proposals on the original terms and withdraw its own counter-proposals.²⁴⁴

Dulles was aware of the large Soviet expenditures to quell growing unrest in Eastern Europe. He also knew the probable cost of the Aswan Dam project, and apparently was sceptical of the Soviet Union's financial capacity during that time to grant a loan of that magnitude.²⁴⁵ Apart from the damage it would inflict on Nasser, Dulles' withdrawal of the American offer would thus have had the added effect of placing the Soviet Union in a high embarrassing position. Dulles assumed that "If the Russians say no this will undermine their prestige - all over the world, particularly in the Arab world".²⁴⁶ A positive Russian reply to Nasser's request on the other hand, Dulles thought would provoke the anger of the Soviet satellite countries which could be intensified through American propaganda within the satellite bloc with the theme that "You don't get bread because you are being squeezed to build a dam".²⁴⁷

243. Congressional Record, Senate, 21 August 1957, p.14072, Mr. Knowland's statement; see also Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, p.64.

244. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, White House, memos. Box No.4, meeting with the President, 13 July 1956, p.3.

245. Meyer, op.cit., p.143; interview with Ahmad Hamrush, Cairo.

246. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Jackson papers (Assistant to the President), Box 56, folder, time inc. file log 1956, 20 July 1956, lunch in Washington with Dulles.

247. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.5, 19 July 1956, telephone call to Allen Dulles. Dulles tried to exploit the atmosphere that followed Khrushchev's February anti-Stalinist speech; certain "revisionist" tendencies began to appear in Eastern Europe, and led the Soviets to crush them later in October-November 1956.

Dulles' miscalculation was thus responsible for his decision to withdraw the American offer. On 26 July 1956, seven days after Dulles' decision, Nasser reacted to "the slap in the face received from the West",²⁴⁸ by nationalising the Suez Canal Company, the revenue from which would henceforth be used to construct the High Dam.

The prospects of peace were now remote and slim. One hundred days after Dulles' decision to withdraw the funds, and eight days before the presidential election in America - 29 October - the Israelis attacked Egypt, and that put an end to Dulles' attempt to achieve peace, or at least a modus vivendi between the two sides. American hopes for Egypt to become the first Arab state to make peace with Israel had been dashed.

The American failure to achieve peace demonstrated new realities, namely, that the success or failure of a global power's policy sometimes would hinge on the attitudes and decisions of regional powers or even regional leaders. The lesson to be drawn from this whole affair was that Nasser's images and his ambitions as a regional leader conflicted with the United States' responsibility as a global power to maintain and secure its own interests. The Eisenhower administration had intended to contain Nasser's influence and not to bolster him into a major Third World leader. In the end peace, however desirable, was not a goal on its own merits. According to Dulles, at least, United States' objectives in the area were to accomplish the dual purpose of "preserving the State of Israel" and at the same time keeping good relations with the Arab oil-bearing countries,²⁴⁹ a near impossible task.

248. Interview with Ali Sabri, Cairo.

249. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, Box No.4, folder, meeting with the President, memo. of conversation with the President, 2 March 1956.

CHAPTER SIX

THE UNITED STATES AND THE SUEZ CRISIS

Nasser increased his popularity with and cemented his leadership of the Egyptian people when he made a speech on 26 July 1956 announcing the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. Anthony Eden heard of Nasser's move in the middle of a dinner at Downing Street given in honour of King Faisal of Iraq and his prime minister, Nuri Es-Said. Eden immediately summoned his senior ministers, the chiefs of staff of the armed forces, and the Ambassadors of France and the United States. The American ambassador, Winthrop Aldrich, was on holiday, and his place was taken by his charge d'affaires, Andrew Foster.¹ The emergency meeting lasted for two hours, and at five o'clock that Friday morning Foster sent his report to Washington: "Cabinet takes an extremely grave view of situation and very strong feelings were expressed, especially by Eden, that Nasser must not be allowed to get away with it...The question confronting cabinet tonight was of course extent to which US would go in supporting and participating in firm position vis-a-vis Nasser in terms of economic sanctions and beyond that if necessary military action".²

The Americans' key NATO allies, Britain and France, considered the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company unacceptable. At that time nearly 25 per cent of Britain's imports passed through the Canal; one-

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1. Mohamed Heikal, Cairo Documents, op.cit., p.97; Eden, Full Circle, op.cit., pp.423-4.
 2. Foster, cable to the State Department. Foster's cable is among President Eisenhower's papers at Gettysburg, quoted in Kennet Love, Suez: The Twice-fought War, op.cit., pp.354-5.

third of the total traffic through the Canal was British-registered, and by far the most important consideration was that a large percentage of the country's oil requirements depended on the Canal.³ Without the presence of British troops in the Canal Zone, nationalisation seemed to put British interests at the mercy of Egypt.⁴ So shortly afterwards, Anthony Eden told Parliament, "No arrangement for the future use of this great international waterway can be acceptable to the British Government which would leave it in the unfettered control of a single power which could exploit it purely for purposes of national policy".⁵

The Canal was also a vital economic factor for the French, especially since there were some 70,000 French share-holders in the Canal Company. But even more important than the economic implications created by this move, French leaders, particularly the military, felt great enmity towards Nasser because of his support for the Algerian rebels. Nasser's unfriendly actions were making it much more difficult for the French to suppress the Algerian revolt that was steadily draining away their resources.⁶ Indeed, France was even more ardently committed than Britain to a showdown with Nasser, and from the outset of the crisis the French leadership considered all the possible means to achieve their aims.⁷

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3. Eden, Full Circle, op.cit., pp.426 and 429; Meyer, op.cit., p.153. Thomas, The Suez Affair, op.cit.; Arthur K. Marmor, Air Operations in Suez Incident 1956, pp.3-4. See also RG 218 CCS-092 Egypt, note by the Secretary of Defence to JCS, 31 July 1956.
 4. Eden, Full Circle, op.cit., pp.465-6.
 5. RG 218, "A post-analysis of the crisis in the Suez Canal Zone", USAEF AIR Intelligence Summary, May 1957, p.21 s.
 6. Marmor, op.cit., p.4.
 7. Ambassador Dillon's report to Eisenhower; Eisenhower, Waging Peace, p.36. See also Roy Fullick, Suez: the Double War, op.cit., p.14; Neff, Warriors at Suez, op.cit., p.282.

Both Britain and France were thus determined that Nasser's challenge could not go unanswered. As Eden pointed out to Eisenhower on 31 July 1956, "My colleagues and I are convinced that we must be ready in the last resort to use force to bring Nasser to his senses. For our part, we are prepared to do so. I have this morning instructed our Chief of Staff to prepare a military plan accordingly".⁸

The French Foreign Minister, Christian Pineau, publicly stated that France would not accept the unilateral action of Colonel Nasser. Prime Minister Guy Mollet went even further, and called Nasser an "apprentice dictator", whose methods were similar to Hitler's: "The policy of blackmail alternating with flagrant violations of international agreements". He announced that France had decided upon "an energetic and severe counterstrike".⁹ The leaders of Britain and France were spoiling for a fight. So they made arrangements with each other to co-ordinate plans for a united military response.¹⁰

Three important factors now stood between the determination of the leaders of Britain and France to go to war and its speedy realisation. The first was that a military intervention would take time to prepare.¹¹ The second, according to Murphy, the American diplomat, was the impact this move would have on America. Eden hoped that if Britain and France resorted to force to settle their dispute with Egypt, the US

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8. Eden, Full Circle, op.cit., p.428. See also Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, subject series, alphabetical serial Box No.11, UK to the White House, 31 July 1956, Eden message to Eisenhower.
 9. Neff, op.cit., p.280.
 10. Robertson, Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy, p.76.
 11. Neff, op.cit., pp.288-9; also Marmor, op.cit., pp.79; Andre Beaufre, The Suez Expedition.

would provide a nuclear umbrella to counter the possibility of a Soviet nuclear threat.¹² Thirdly, their dependence on Middle East oil required them to ensure that the Americans would provide alternative supplies in case of an emergency.¹³

If the role of the United States was of pivotal importance to Britain and France, it was to prove no less crucial to the interests of Egypt, their common antagonist. In order to understand the American role and its impact upon American-Egyptian relations, it is necessary to identify some of the principal factors that American policy-makers took into consideration.

From the legal point of view, President Eisenhower realised that the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company was "within Egypt's right until its operation of the Canal was proven incompetent",¹⁴ because, in his view, the Suez Canal Company was a commercial corporation.¹⁵ He opposed the use of force from the beginning, and emphasised this stand to Eden.¹⁶ Four days after the nationalisation

12. Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, p.465.

13. Eden, *Full Circle*, op.cit., p.427. In Eden's telegram to Eisenhower on 27 July he said, "If the Canal were closed we should have to ask you to help us by reducing the amount which you draw from the pipeline...and possibly by sending us supplementary supplies for a time from your side of the world".

14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Diary, Box No.16, conversation with the President, 28 July 1956. Also see interview with Dwight D. Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History Project, pp.30-1. See also Eisenhower papers, Ann Whiteman file, personal, 2 November 1956, Eisenhower, "No one can question the legal right of Egypt to nationalize the Canal Company".

15. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Oral History, interview with General Goodpaster, Vol.2, p.82.

16. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, subject series, alphabetical Box No.11, Uk the White House, 31 July 1956, Eisenhower to Eden, "Early this morning I received the message telling me of your decision to employ force without delay. I personally feel sure that the American reaction would be severe, and that the great areas of the world would share that reaction".

of the Canal Company, Dulles restated this position in a top secret instruction to the American envoy in London, Robert Murphy, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State, by saying, "We make no commitments for the use of force without Congressional action, which is extremely problematical under existing conditions".¹⁷

Events moved rapidly. Alerted by news from London and Paris, President Eisenhower began to think of despatching his close personal friend Robert Anderson on another peace mission to Cairo, to find a formula whereby to avert any Anglo-French military action against Egypt.¹⁸ Whether he sent Anderson or not on this mission, it seems clear that the Eisenhower administration was keen to prevent any outbreak of hostilities. This can be attributed to a combination of causes.

Eisenhower did not wish his record of peaceful foreign policy to be marred, especially before or during the re-election campaign in which he was seeking to gain Republican control of both Houses of Congress.¹⁹ Also, the Republican administration was aware that if it called a special session of congress to debate the idea of supporting Anglo-French military against Egypt, it would be seen as an effort to back French colonialism in North Africa and elsewhere, and the Democrats would make political capital out of it.²⁰ Furthermore, Eisenhower was

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17. Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.5, folder July 1956, Department of State to American embassy, London, eyes only Murphy, from Secretary, 30 July 1956, top secret.
 18. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Diary Box No.16, July 1956, telephone calls, 28 July 1956.
 19. In stressing Eisenhower's dedication to peace, the Republican platform exploited the fact that the Eisenhower administration had been credited with ending the Korean war: see Meyer, *op.cit.*, p.153; Spiegel, *op.cit.*, p.72; interview with R. Hare, Washington, D.C.
 20. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.11, memo. of telephone conversation with President, 30 July 1956.

aware that American public opinion was not "prepared to support such a move".²¹

A closely-related factor was the American leadership's desire to keep the Anglo-French/Egyptian dispute over Suez sharply separated from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Fears that Britain and France would find a willing partner in Israel for a military solution to their problem increased the administration's pre-election anxieties.²² Added to that was the attitude of Dulles who was hoping to win over Nasser, who he saw as the only Arab leader capable to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Apart from the above reasons, the American leadership understood that the interests of the US were not greatly affected by Egypt's decision, as long as the Suez Canal continued to function. United States shipping comprised only 3.1 per cent of the total shipping through the Canal. Moreover, the United States government had no financial interests in the Suez Canal Company, whereas it had considerable economic, political and military interests in the Middle East".²³

Another factor influencing the Eisenhower administration was that most West European countries were dependent on Middle East oil, while the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Iraq, depended on the goods and services that they received in exchange.²⁴ While these

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21. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.6, Dulles, September 1956, draft letter to Eden, 8 September 1956: Eisenhower to Eden, "I must say frankly there is as yet no public opinion in this country which is prepared to support such a move".
 22. Neff, *op.cit.*, p.288. Also Meyer, *op.cit.*, p.159; Dulles Oral History Collection, Phleger Herman Oral History, p.48.
 23. NA RG 218 CCS-092 Egypt, note by Secretary to JCS, 31 July 1956, pp.306-20, including JC-2105/38.
 24. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, WHO office of the Special Assistant for NSC affairs (OSANSC), records No.52-61, NSC briefing notes, sub series Box No.14, folder Near and Middle East Oil, 56-60, preliminary papers, Middle East oil situation, Economic Intelligence 19-20, Committee's ad hoc working group on Middle East oil, 3 May 1956.

relations were bilateral, they were none the less asymmetrical. The European countries, especially the United Kingdom and France, were greatly in need of oil from the Arab countries, whereas these countries were less dependent on the goods from them.

Events before the Suez crisis had confirmed this as an existing reality that the American leadership readily understood.²⁵ The new situation facing Eisenhower's administration was indeed a cause for worry. The likelihood of an Arab oil embargo was hard to assess, but for a variety of reasons the impact of such an action would have been detrimental; Eisenhower was well aware of the heavy dependence of his allies on the Canal, especially of their need to receive their oil through it. "The economy of the European countries would collapse if those oil supplies were cut off."²⁶ In a meeting with his top advisers, Eisenhower reiterated the same attitude because in his view, "If the movement of oil were interfered with or the pipelines were cut we would be faced with a critical situation".²⁷

25. Crude Oil Supply of Western Europe by Source and Country 1954
(thousands of barrels per day)

Country	Local Production	Imports from Middle East	Others	Total Supply
Belgium	-	75	4	79
France	10	449	29	488
UK	1	490	48	539
W. Germany	52	105	15	172
Italy	2	305	13	320
Netherlands	18	161	32	211

Ibid., OASNSC, p.3, Table 5.

26. Eisenhower Diary, quoted in Neff, *op.cit.*, p.282. See also Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.5, from Eisenhower to Eden, 31 August 1956.

27. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Diary series, Box No.16, folder July 1956, Diary, State memo.27 July 1956, memo. of conversation with President.

Another external factor which motivated the American leadership was the fear of the adverse effect an American military involvement might have on world public opinion, especially within the Arab world and among Muslim nations.²⁸ It could appear that the Western powers were ganging up on a small nation like Egypt. By the same token, the American leadership queried whether such action would not in fact enhance Nasser's prestige as the martyr of strong-arm colonialist methods, rather than weaken his charismatic appeal, which Britain and France were aiming to do.²⁹

Furthermore, it was clear to the Americans that only the Soviet Union stood to gain from the bad image of the US this could foster. Subsequently the American joint chiefs of staff in their assessment thought that "It would be harmful to US and Western interests if the Middle East became more closely affiliated with the communist bloc or more firmly neutralist".³⁰ Apart from that, the CIA warned that a resort to force by Britain and France in "the Suez crisis would result in increased Soviet pressure on Iran",³¹ which no doubt would adversely affect the American strategy of containing Soviet penetration in the Middle East.

Nasser's alliance with Saudi Arabia (against the Iraq-Jordan Hashemite bloc) was one of the most important elements which motivated

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- 28. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Diary series, Box No.16, staff memo, folder memo. of conversation with President, 31 July 1956.
 - 29. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.6, Dulles September 1956, draft letter to Anthony Eden: Eisenhower, "The use of military force against Egypt under present circumstances might have consequences even more serious than causing the Arabs to support Nasser".
 - 30. NA RG 218 CCS-092 Egypt JSC 2105/38, 31 July 1956, pp.306-20, including No.D.
 - 31. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Eisenhower papers, Ann Whitman file, Box No.8, NSC 297, meeting of the NSC, 7 September 1956, CIA Report.

American policy during the crisis. Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the National Security Council that they were "very greatly concerned to be assured of continued access to Saudi Arabian oil".³² The policy-makers realised that any American initiative during the crisis not acceptable to the Egyptian government would not find it any more to the liking of the Saudis, because of their commitment to a patriotic pan-Arab philosophy. Also, there was the consideration of Saudi-British animosity over the Buraimi and Baghdad Pact .

The British and French had no illusions concerning the personal misgivings of Dulles about Nasser. In the recently declassified minutes of a meeting held with Congressional leaders in mid-August, Dulles compared Nasser to Hitler, saying that "After all our efforts to work with him, finally we have become convinced he is an extremely dangerous fanatic".³³

Although by now Dulles affected an anti-Nasser attitude, Eden and Mollet could not understand that there was still a slight difference between his policy and theirs. In spite of being scandalised by what he saw as Egypt's intentions regarding the rights of property and the function of international legal arrangements, Dulles believed that "Nasser must be made to disgorge this theft by international means...not by force".³⁴ Eden and Mollet's eagerness for war blinded them to the fact that the difference between their policy and that of Dulles lay in methods, not

32. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, *op.cit.*, NSC folder 295, the meeting of NSC, 30 August 1956, the Suez Canal situation, p.7 (JCS). ARAMCO (the Arabian American Oil Company) in Saudi Arabia was totally American-owned. See also RG 218, CSS-092, Egypt, 31 July 1956, note by the Secretary to JCS.

33. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House office of the Staff Sec, records 1952-1961, legislative meetings series, Box No.3, L.31a(2), 12 August 1956, p.34, bipartisan meeting (Minich series).

34. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Diary series, Box No.16, July 1956, Diary staff memos. folders, memo. of conversation with President, 31 July 1956.

in their ultimate goal.³⁵ In view of these circumstances and Dulles' attitude towards Nasser, there is little wonder that Eden and Mollet were confused. Their frustration, together with Dulles' tactics and controversial statements, led them to assume that the United States would tolerate military intervention if diplomacy failed.³⁶ The question is, Why was the American stance in the midst of this dispute so ambiguous? The ambiguity of the American position allowed those who had opted for American support to nurture false hopes. Herman Finer gives two reasons for this. Firstly, for Dulles, the main issue was the attitude of his adversary, the Soviet Union, in global conflict. Therefore he did not tell his allies that the USA would keep its hands away from the Middle East while they were preparing for their enterprise. He feared the growth of Soviet strength in this area of the world as a consequence of forceful action taken by the allies. He would look at the problem merely as one of British and French national interests in the Middle East. Secondly, in its foreign policy the United States had always shown a marked reluctance to take a decisive stand, supported by force, except in extreme cases, such as Pearl Harbour. Usually in times of conflict she has tended to seek a middle course.

35. Nutting, Nasser, p.147.

36. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Diary series, Box No.17, August 1956, Diary staff memos., White House memo. of record, subject: Suez Canal situation, Presidential meeting, 12 August 1956. In a Presidential meeting before the first London conference, Secretary Dulles, "feels that we must not lead the British and the French to believe that we are willing to support any kind of precipitous action they may take. As a result he believes that we must indicate that...if the London conference does present a proposal to Nasser and he rejects it, and the British and the French feel that it is necessary to act in order to protect their interests, it would seem to be clear that the US should give them moral and economic support". See also Eden, Full Circle, op.cit., p.437.

37. Finer, Dulles over Suez, pp.112-3.

The American policy-makers did not consider the matter closed. In order to achieve their goals, they embarked on a three-pronged strategy. They tried to use the Arab oil countries as a lever against Nasser, on the ground that "...if Nasser goes too far, it will cut off their income and Nasser will begin to lose his position".³⁸ At the same time they began to reconsider their economic aid to Egypt.³⁹ Simultaneously Dulles decided to bring the issue before a specially created international forum, where Britain, France and Egypt could perhaps be persuaded to accept some form of compromise. Nevertheless, Dulles insisted from the very beginning on dampening down any appeals to the United Nations over the Suez crisis. In his meeting with the British and French foreign ministers, he did his best to convince them to omit any referral to the UN from their own drafts of the tripartite communique before the documents were finally accepted for publication. He strongly pressed the point that he would not tolerate any mention of the United Nations, because the inevitable Soviet veto would, from the Western point of view, make any desirable settlement impossible.⁴⁰

On 2 August, the French, British and American communique was issued, deploring the disruptive nature of Egypt's action, and drawing attention to the "freedom and security of the Canal" according to the 1888 Convention. Insisting that the "operating arrangements under the international system" should be re-established, Dulles joined his allies in convoking an international conference of the "nations only concerned

38. Dwight D. Eisenhower, White House office of the Staff Sec., research 1952-61, legislative meetings series, Box No.3 L31a, August, bi-partisan meeting, Minich, p.3. For more details, see Eveland, Ropes of Sand, pp.202-9.

39. Minich, Series. In bi-partisan meeting, Secretary Dulles declared that "No heavy payment due Egypt until next year".

40. Princeton University, J.F. Dulles paper, Box 110, Suez Canal, pre-conference, 31 July-9 August 1956, top secret, p.4. See also Finer, op.cit., pp.136-7.

with use of the Canal",⁴¹ to take the appropriate action. The policies orchestrated by Eisenhower and Dulles reflected the American dilemma vis-a-vis its global responsibility. Dulles was trying very hard to achieve a variety of goals, some of them contradictory. On the one hand he attempted to show his willingness to ally the USA with Britain and France, despite the real difference between them. On the other hand, he tried to show a certain respect for Nasser's sovereignty and, while making some threatening gestures, did nothing openly that might push Nasser and the Arab countries completely into the Eastern bloc.

Nasser understood that for Dulles the principal legal question was Egypt's ability and willingness to maintain free passage through the Canal, as guaranteed by the 1888 Convention.⁴² On 31 July, Nasser announced that normal trade would go on with Britain unless outside intervention occurred. He further stated that the freedom of navigation in the Canal would not be affected by nationalisation, confirming that "Egypt had always physically protected the Canal and would continue to do so".⁴³ Three days later Ali Sabri, Chief of the Egyptian President's office, restated this position, confirming that the nationalisation did not in any way or to any extent affect the international commitments of Egypt. "We are as ever determined to honour all our international obligations."⁴⁴

41. Dept. of State publication, "The Suez Canal Problem", 26 July-22 September 1956, pp.37-42.

42. Princeton University, John Foster Dulles paper, Box No.120, secret from Dulles to Nasser, p.2, 19 March 1957.

43. Eisenhower, Waging Peace, op.cit., p.41.

44. RIIA Documents (1956), p.156, quoted in Finer, op.cit., p.124. See also The Times, 4 August 1956.

Even before Dulles' return from London, Egypt had attempted to block Western efforts to impose international control upon the Suez Canal Company. The Egyptian government undertook three political initiatives. Firstly, it tried to enlist Arab support in order to consolidate its position. On 1 August 1956, Nasser declared that Arab nationalism was strongly entrenched from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic. He added that, "the Arabs represented a strong group which would march forward".⁴⁵ Even Nuri es-Said, Nasser's adversary, felt constrained to support Egypt, declaring that "Nationalisation has become the undoubted right of any nation", and that "Iraq stands on Egypt's side in the dispute over the Suez issue".⁴⁶ Day after day the Arab nations and the African and Asian countries proclaimed their support of Nasser, and his image and position in the struggle against the Western powers was substantially strengthened.⁴⁷ In terms of Cold War politics, Egyptian pressure on the United States was maintained by the many conferences between Nasser and the Soviet ambassador in Cairo.⁴⁸ The Egyptian-Soviet contacts were especially disturbing to Dulles, since they could have enhanced Soviet prestige in the Third World at that time.⁴⁹ Nevertheless Nasser did not exclude the possibility of neutralising the United States and separating it from its Western allies, by praising the "moderation" of the United States government.⁵⁰ Nasser seemed quite

45. The Times, 1 August 1956, "Colonel Nasser's Piracy".

46. The Times, 6 August 1956, "Baghdad Support for Egypt".

47. The Times, 1-7 August 1956. See also Finer, op.cit., p.124.

48. The Times, 6 August 1956, "Consultation in Cairo: Nasser has seen the Soviet Ambassador Kisselove three times in three days".

49. Finer, op.cit., p.125. See also interview with H. Byroade.

50. Finer, op.cit., p.125.

adept in handling the situation. On 6 August he stated that he intended to devote a large share of the revenues from the Canal to modernising and widening it, to make possible the passage of large oil tankers,⁵¹ thus giving the Western powers no excuse to use force against Egypt.

The First London Conference: 16-23 August

The first London conference was convened on 16 August with the declared purpose of fostering an agreement between the major users of the Suez Canal to a system of international control that would withstand the political pressures of single nations.⁵² Twenty-two nations were in attendance: the top sixteen users of the Suez Canal and the original signatories to the Convention of Constantinople which guaranteed free access for all shipping to the Canal.⁵³

For the United States, this conference appeared to offer a chance of internationalising the Suez Canal problem, as well as limiting the scope for independent action by its allies against Egypt. Besides gaining time for the American administration, it led to the formation of a group of nations whose common interests strengthened the pressure brought to bear on Nasser.⁵⁴

51. The Times, 7 August 1956.

52. Department of State, documentation publication, The Suez Canal Problem, 26 July-22 September 1956, p.53.

53. Signatories to the Convention

United Kingdom

Netherlands

Spain

France

Italy

USSR

*Egypt

Turkey

*refused to attend

Main Users of the Canal

Australia

Japan

United Kingdom

New Zealand

Ceylon

Norway

Denmark

Pakistan

Ethiopia

Persia

India

Sweden

France

USA

Indonesia

*Greece

54. Department of State Bulletin, 13 August 1956, p.263.

The story of the first London conference has been told many times. What concerns us here is the role of the American Secretary of State at the conference, and its effect upon American-Egyptian relations during the crisis. Although invited to attend, Egypt preferred to stay away. The three Western powers immediately froze Egyptian assets and funds in their banks, and Britain and France mobilised their reserves. On 12 August Nasser gave his reasons for not attending the conference. He accused the three Western powers of conspiring to starve and terrorise the Egyptian people. Nothing could illustrate Egypt's reaction better than Nasser's statement on 12 August 1956, when he declared that, "Egypt strongly deplores these measures and regards them as a threat to the Egyptian people, to make them surrender part of their territory and sovereignty to an international body, which in fact is international colonialism".⁵⁵

The role of Secretary Dulles was paramount at the conference. In order to avoid any frustration of his political aims, Dulles worked out with the British and French a draft consisting of concrete proposals. It called for the creation of an international board that would operate the Canal and guarantee respect for Egyptian sovereignty at the same time. Dulles informed Eisenhower that "It will go in as a United States paper, not as a tripartite paper....Also I believe it will be more acceptable as such".⁵⁶

To gain sufficient support for his political manoeuvre, Dulles tried to form an anti-nationalisation grouping under the banner of

55. Department of State, documents publication, The Suez Canal, op.cit., pp.50-1.

56. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.5, Dulles -256, from London to the President, 18 August 1956.

internationalism. He used his personal influence to induce the Afro-Asian delegates to commit themselves to the American proposal, thereby showing that it was not just a Western view, but to some extent an international one.⁵⁷

In actual fact, the Americans understood that their tactics were not feasible. Dulles was motivated more by the aim of keeping his allies under American control than by any conviction that an international control board was workable. During this period Dulles and Nasser were of one mind, seeing the conference as another way of gaining the time both of them needed to complete their task.

Once Britain and France were persuaded to negotiate, Dulles had in fact begun to weaken the force of the conference. He declared that, "This is not a conference through which to deliver any kind of ultimatum to Egypt. None of us would for a moment entertain that purpose".⁵⁸

In order to prove his goodwill and put an end to the Soviet attempt to fish in muddy waters,⁵⁹ Dulles secretly contacted Nasser through his ambassador in Cairo, asking him not to give Eden the chance he was waiting for.⁶⁰ Dulles' advice did not go unheeded; Nasser exploited

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57. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, NSC, Box No.8, 298, meeting of NSC, 30 August 1956. Dulles induced Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Ethiopia to support the American proposals. Also see Princeton University, Dulles private papers, Box No.110, from Dulles to Foreign Minister of Iran, 8 August 1956. Also see op.cit., Box No.106, from Dulles to Adnan Menderes of Turkey, 29 August 1956. Dulles also pressed Spain to support the American proposal. He informed the Spanish foreign minister that, "It would be a great shock to American public opinion that...Spain was aligned with the USSR, India,...". See Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.5, from London to the President, 22 August 1956.
58. Department of State Bulletin, No.897, 29 September 1956, "Conclusion of London Conference", statement of 20 August by Dulles, p.371.
59. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Duppes papers, general correspondence and memos. series, Box No.1, 21 August 1956, Dulles, "I spoke of the fact that the Soviet Union was actively wooing the Arab states".
60. Mohamed Heikal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents, op.cit., p.100.

the American moves towards peace. His personal envoy, Ali Sabri, privately approached the American delegation to the conference, informing them that, "Force was only a primitive way and there was no sense in it, because Egypt stood ready to work out a reasonable and just solution to the Canal problem. We are not going to accept the internationalisation the Canal..there is a peaceful way of settling this matter, and if such a method is applied, it will be found that we are ready to give our wholehearted co-operation".⁶¹

The Egyptian offer and Dulles' willingness not to give the impression that the Western powers had united together against Egypt led him to refuse to participate in the five-nations delegation dispatched to Cairo by the London conference.⁶² Although the British urged Dulles most strongly to take on the negotiations with Nasser, since "They did not have confidence that anybody else could pull it off",⁶³ Loy Henderson was sent in his place, and the mission was headed by the Australian prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies.

The American administration tried very hard to exhaust every possible means of achieving a peaceful settlement, and on 25 August 1956, a few days before the Menzies mission set out, Eisenhower asked the Indian prime minister, Nehru, to use his personal influence on Nasser to reach a solution to the crisis.⁶⁴

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61. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, White House memos.series, Box No.31, folder, White House correspondence, general 56(2), re. Suez, forward to the Sec.23181 (95).
 62. Macmillan, Riding the Storm 1956-1957, p.108. Maybe Dulles' reluctance can be attributed to his awareness that Nasser would not accept the Western proposals, especially after Shepilov's inflammatory speech against them: see Eisenhower Papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.5, Dulles folder August 1956, from Dulles to Eisenhower, incoming telegram, 21 August 1956.
 63. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, op.cit., memo.of conversation with Harold Macmillan, 21 August 1956.
 64. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Ann Whitman file, international series, Box No.26, folder India, from Eisenhower to Nehru, 25 August 1956.

On the eve of the mission's departure for Cairo, Eisenhower and Dulles spoke about the Anglo-French attempt to use the London conference proposals as a final offer to Egypt. Eisenhower stated in a press conference on 31 August, "For ourselves we are determined to exhaust every possible, every feasible method of peaceful settlement, and we believe it can be done. We are committed to a peaceful settlement".⁶⁵ Dulles, at a press conference on 28 August, said, "The Suez Canal is not a primary concern to the USA".⁶⁶ Privately worried, Eisenhower wrote a long letter to Eden on 31 August warning him, "I really do not see how a successful result could be achieved by forcible means. The use of force would, it seems to me, vastly increase the area of jeopardy".⁶⁷

It was obvious that American diplomacy had rendered Menzies' mission powerless. The mission held a series of meetings with Nasser between 3 and 9 September, but it was doomed to failure for a number of reasons. The mission had neither inducements to offer Egypt nor a mandate to negotiate on the terms of the resolution as they stood.⁶⁸ Also, the head of the mission, the Australian prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies, was one of the factors behind its failure, because he was ideologically and personally directly opposed to Nasser.⁶⁹

65. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower, press conference, 31 August 1956, McCordle papers, Box No.5, Suez.

66. Mohamed Heikal, Cairo Documents, op.cit., p.103.

67. Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.5, August 1956, from Eisenhower to Eden, 31 August 1956.

68. Meyer, op.cit., p.161; Princeton University, John Foster Dulles, Oral History Project, Loy Henderson, p.27.

69. See Neff, op.cit., p.300.

In Egypt Menzies and his mission had three meetings with Nasser. According to Mohamed Heikal, Nasser's friend and confidant, the discussions broke down when Menzies threatened Nasser by saying, "Mr. President, your refusal of an international administration will be the beginning of trouble".⁷⁰ Nasser refused to negotiate further, the discussions came to an end on 9 September, and the mission left Cairo empty-handed.

Loy Henderson recalls that Washington had not wanted the mission to be used to threaten Egypt.⁷¹ Winthrop Aldrich, the American ambassador to the United Kingdom, claims that "Eisenhower sent a cable to Menzies saying he had never intended to use force".⁷²

Menzies blamed the failure of his mission on the pronouncements of Eisenhower and Dulles which were issued while he was in the middle of his negotiations.⁷³ Even Heikal agreed with Menzies that the mission was doomed to fail because of Eisenhower's statements.⁷⁴ These statements by the American leadership puzzled Nasser himself.⁷⁵

The failure of the Menzies' mission put Eisenhower's administration in a difficult situation. The Americans were faced with a dilemma, that was clear from Eisenhower's telephone conversation with Dulles: "We were in an unfortunate position, because we could not really take a stand; we did not want to alienate our friends and we wanted to keep NATO strong, but we cannot agree with these people in their extreme attitude".⁷⁶

70. Mohamed Heikal, Qissat al Suwiss, p.168.

71. Dulles Oral History, Princeton University, Loy Henderson, p.27; interview with Henderson.

72. Dulles Oral History, Princeton University, Winthrop Aldrich, p.38.

73. Loy Henderson, op.cit., p.27.

74. Heikal, Qissat al-Suwiss, p.103.

75. Ibid., p.103. In his statement Eisenhower excluded the possibility of using force against Egypt.

76. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone calls series, Box No.11, folder, memos. of telephone conversations, 7 September 1956, telephone call to the President.

As usual, American diplomacy tried to achieve a variety of goals, some of them contradictory. Therefore another way to buy time had now to be discovered.

While the French and the British searched desperately for an internationally acceptable pretext to go to war against Egypt, Dulles did his best to sidetrack them. The American administration repeatedly offered diplomatic alternatives to the violence its allies were proposing. Eisenhower began to think of keeping up economic pressure on Egypt, which in his view "if continued will cause distress in Egypt". To limit Nasser's influence Eisenhower told Eden on 8 September that "there are Arab rivalries to be exploited, and which can be exploited if we do not make Nasser an Arab hero". Furthermore, in his long letter to Eden mentioned above, Eisenhower pointed out that there were alternatives to the present dependence on the Canal which should be developed, "perhaps by more tankers and a possible new pipeline to Turkey, and some possible re-routing of oil".⁷⁷

The American Initiative

The Americans understood very well that this diplomatic breakdown would mark the end of the administration's efforts to build up its regional strategy in the Middle East. Eisenhower decided therefore to abandon the previous pattern of American diplomacy, whereby the United States used to exert its influence behind the scenes by co-operating with its allies. Now he chose to take a direct role in handling the situation by sending one of his friends (Robert Anderson or Eric

77. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.6, Dulles, September 1956, letter to Anthony Eden, 8 September 1956.

Johnston) to Nasser with a concrete American proposal, giving Egypt a share in the Suez Canal Company's revenue and seats on its board of directors. According to Eisenhower, "Egypt would get half its revenue and have on the Board three out of five Directors, and they would be in a better position than they are today".⁷⁸

Secretary Dulles did not welcome Eisenhower's peace initiative, on the grounds that the British were getting very sensitive, because they felt that the Americans were not working with them.⁷⁹ Dulles' objection can be attributed to his wish to avoid an open rift with his allies. Also he wanted to offer them evidence of his apparent sympathy with their demands, and hoped that they would listen to him and not immediately use their armed forces against Egypt.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the Americans did their best to avoid creating the impression that the Tripartite Powers were "ganging up" against Egypt.⁸¹ Therefore the United States did not send its foreign secretary to a NATO meeting in Paris on 5 September, called to discuss the Suez crisis.⁸²

Events moved rapidly, and the French and British tried to find an excuse for war. The British stopped exchanging items of intelligence about developments in the Middle East with the United States.⁸³ Eden informed the American leaders of the Anglo-French intention to bring the Suez Canal problem before the United Nations. We have already seen that Dulles opposed this, because of the possibility of a Soviet veto.⁸⁴

78. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Diary series, Box 18, September 1956, phone calls, 7 September 1956.

79. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.11, folder. memos. of telephone calls, White House, 7 September 1956, telephone call to the President.

80. Finer, op.cit., p.207.

81. Ibid., p.206.

82. Macmillan, op.cit., p.113.

83. Princeton University, Dulles Oral History Project, Loy Henderson, p.30.

84. Interview with Loy Henderson, Washington, D.C.: Finer, op.cit., p.206.

However, he understood that his allies had to demonstrate that they had fulfilled their obligations under the UN Charter, so that they could then plead that all peaceful means of resolving the crisis had been exhausted.

The Suez Canal Users' Association

Dulles immediately offered a new formula to keep the negotiations going between the parties in the dispute.⁸⁵ The new United States plan called for the formation of an international association of Canal users that would maintain and manage the Canal, hire the pilots, and thus control its operation.⁸⁶ This group was to be known as the Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA).⁸⁷ Although it was Dulles' brainchild,⁸⁸ he somehow convinced Eden to explore the idea and even to suggest it as his own. Eden yielded to American pressure, thinking that the SCUA would be a useful face-saving formula for him and the French. The American ambassador in London gained the impression that the SCUA plan had greatly lessened the tension "not only in the Opposition ranks, but even among many Tories."⁸⁹

As soon as the Americans learnt of this, and heard that their allies had accepted the Users' Club scheme, Secretary Dulles had another shock in store for Eden. In a press conference on 13 September⁹⁰ he declared that, "The United States does not intend to shoot its way through the Suez Canal if Egypt tries to block the passage of US ships travelling

85. Murphy, Diplomat among Warriors, p.467.

86. Macmillan, op.cit., p.119; Love, op.cit., pp.425-7.

87. Finer, op.cit., p.207.

88. Department of State Bulletin, No.900, 24 September 1956, "Dulles press conference" on 13 September 1956, p.479.

89. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Papers, international series, Suez summaries, Summary No.9, 14 September 1956.

90. One day after Eden had presented the SCUA plan to the House of Commons.

under the auspices of the proposed new Users' Association".⁹¹

Furthermore he added ambiguously, "Each nation had decided for itself what action it would have to take to defend and if possible realize its right which it believes it has as a matter of treaty".⁹²

Dulles' statements frustrated Eden, who write in his memoirs that "The words were an advertisement to Nasser that he could reject the project with impunity". Eden's bitterness led him to recall that "such cynicism towards allies destroys true partnership. It leaves only the choice of parting a master and vassal relationship in foreign policy".⁹³

In 1957 Dulles explained the main reasons behind his controversial actions regarding the Users' Association. He pointed out to the British defence minister that "The British and the French had never been willing for their ships to pay tolls to the Users' Association; they wanted to go on paying into the old Suez Canal Company. This meant that the United States alone among the major powers would be working through the Users' Association".⁹⁴ It can therefore be assumed that the Americans realised that their allies expected their military situation to improve even further with the passage of time. Thus there was nothing in the situation to induce them to be flexible or conciliatory towards Nasser, but on the contrary, they could safely achieve their ends without any American objection.

91. Department of State Bulletin, No.900, op.cit., p.479.

92. Ibid.

93. Eden, op.cit., pp.483-4.

94. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library Dulles papers, general correspondence and memo. series, Box No.1, memo. of conversation, 27 January 1957, Dulles to British defence minister.

This assumption is substantiated by the following facts: on 10 September the State Department asked the British and French governments "to exert such influence as they can to keep the pilots on the job until agreement can be reached on the proposed Users' Association".⁹⁵ The American advice went unheeded, and the British and French began to take measures to withdraw their pilots. From this point onwards it became obvious to the American administration, especially to Dulles, that the real issue at stake for Britain and France was Nasser, not the Suez Canal.⁹⁶

On the same day, 15 September, the British and French withdrew their pilots, Nasser rules out the Users' Association project by declaring, "We shall not allow the Western-proposed Canal Users' Association to function through the Canal. We Egyptians shall run the Canal smoothly and efficiently, and if despite this the Canal Users' Association forces its way through the Canal it would be aggression, and would be treated as such".⁹⁷

The Second London Conference

The second plenary session of the Suez Canal conference gathered in London to discuss the Suez Canal Users' Association proposals, with

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- 95. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, international series, Summary No.7, summary of developments in the Suez situation, Canal pilots, 9 September 1956.
 - 96. Although on 4 September the State Department informed Paris, London and Cairo that "the US is trying to avoid any accusation that the US is contributing to breakdown of the Canal operation, and our preference is that any new pilots be hired from the West rather than the East, we do not plan to take any official action against individuals who wish to accept a Suez job, *ibid.*, Box 43, Suez summary 4 September 1956.
 - 97. Khotab wa Tassriat el-Rais jamal, Vol.7, pp.1438-9.

eighteen supporters of the earlier resolution in attendance. The rift between America and its allies became even wider than before. While London and Paris looked upon the seizure of the Canal Company as a breach of international obligations and a direct threat to the security of the free world, "Washington seemed to them to be too ready to treat the matter as a conflict between colonial and anti-colonial interests".⁹⁸

The American perspective encouraged Nasser to approach them, looking for a new face-saving formula. He raised the obvious question with Dulles: whether US vessels would continue to pay the Egyptian authorities for transit as they had since the nationalisation of the Canal. If the answer was affirmative, Nasser maintained that he would "look with greater sympathy towards the Users' Association which is considered as a possible nucleus for a negotiation group".⁹⁹ The American reluctance to oblige its ships to pay tolls to the SCUA can be attributed to the above, since Dulles' chief objective was to prolong the negotiations and to achieve a peaceful solution to the problem.

Under changing circumstances Nasser modified his position.¹⁰⁰ Again and again he showed his readiness to establish negotiating contacts directly with the United States through secret emissaries. Furthermore he outlined some points as a basis for a settlement:

- i) Acceptance of Egyptian sovereignty over the Canal.
- ii) Recognition of the legality of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal.

98. NA RG 218 Record of US Joint Chiefs of Staff, top secret, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vol.VI, Ch.X, the Suez Canal Crisis, p.331.

99. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, international series, Suez summaries, No.15, 24 September 1956.

100. Nutting, *op.cit.*, p.159, "Pressure had been building up from certain Arab countries and from India, the Soviet Union and Tito in favour of an agreed settlement".

- iii) Recognition by Egypt of the legitimate interests
of the Users.¹⁰¹

Egyptian flexibility, and its readiness to break out of the impasse which had troubled the international situation for more than two months, led Eisenhower to instruct Dulles to maintain an independent position as regards the British and the French until "we know definitely what they are up to".¹⁰² Eisenhower's instructions did not go unheeded, and the divergence between the American approach and that of its allies, who were keen to impose the SCUA on Egypt, if necessary by force, became obvious. This was so when Dulles was asked at a press conference in Washington on 2 October whether the new association would have "teeth". "There is talk about the 'teeth' being pulled out of it", said Dulles, "but there is no truth in it if that means the use of force".¹⁰³ Time and again Dulles ^{teeth}restated the same position, stressing that the purpose of the US in relation to the Suez situation was precisely that set out in the First Article of the United Nations Charter, namely to seek a settlement "by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law".¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, behind the scenes American diplomacy began to move in various direction. It began to think in terms of limiting Egypt's influence in the Arab world by toppling the Syrian

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101. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, general correspondence and memo. series, Box No.3, memo. of conversation with Mr. Raimondo Manzini, 30 September 1956.
102. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, White House memo. series, Box No.4, folder, meeting with the President, sec.memo. of conversation, subject, Suez Canal, 2 October 1956.
103. Neff, *op.cit.*, p.320. See also Eden, *op.cit.*, p.499.
104. Department of State Bulletin, 8 October 1956, transcript of "Secretary Dulles' news conference", p.543, 26 September 1956. Officially the Foreign Office blamed the Americans, because in their view "the US failure to act on the payment of tolls to SCUA is directly responsible for Egypt's unwillingness to negotiate". See Eisenhower papers, international series, Suez summaries, Summary No.39, 29 October 1956.

government¹⁰⁵ and bringing about a regime more friendly to the West.¹⁰⁶ Nasser's alliance with Saudi Arabia against the Hashemite bloc was certainly one of the most important elements which the American policy-makers tried to exploit. Eisenhower asked King Saud to use his great influence to bring about a shift in Egypt's position. He concluded his letter by saying, "It seems to me that any conciliatory move by President Nasser has been conspicuously lacking".¹⁰⁷

Simultaneously, America kept in secret contact with the oil-producing Arab states in order to get them to exert pressure on Nasser to modify his position.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Eisenhower approached the Indian prime minister, Nehru, for the same reason. At the same time some members of Eisenhower's administration began to study the possibility of toppling Nasser himself, but Eisenhower did not endorse this plan because the time was not ripe for it. In his view, "An action of this kind could not be taken when there is as much active hostility as at present".¹⁰⁹

The Americans were in a difficult situation. On the one hand they were convinced that the British and the French were determined to use military force to ensure non-Egyptian control of the Canal,¹¹⁰ and on the other they realised that Nasser was probably willing to accept

105. The American policy-makers had the feeling that the Syrian government during that time was under Egyptian hegemony. See Eveland, Ropes of Sand, pp.214-29. He refers in his book to American covert attempts to get rid of the pro-Nasser government in Syria. See also Seale, The Struggle for Syria, p.212.

106. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, White House memo. series, Box No.4, folder, meeting with the President (5), 22 September 1956.

107. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, international series, from Eisenhower to King Saud, 18 September 1956, Box No.42, Folder 3. See also in ibid., proposed reply to 25 September message from King Saud, 6 October 1956.

108. Eisenhower Diary series, Box No.18, October 1956, miscellaneous, 8 October 1956, secret to Hoover.

109. Ibid., September 1956, from Eisenhower to Eden, 22 September 1956.

110. Eisenhower Diaries, Box 19, staff memos., memo. of conference, 6 October 1956, Eisenhower, Secretary Hoover, Col.Goodpaster.

some international control of the Canal, provided he could find a face-saving formula. American military analysts were convinced that although the Soviet Union was not in favour of Western military action against Egypt, they would exploit the situation to a point short of forcing such action. All these complex factors had a bearing on American policy at that stage. Their awareness that the British and French were unlikely to accept any compromise which would leave Nasser in power in Egypt¹¹¹ put them in a critical situation.

on 21 September Dulles had a long conversation with Eden. Eden expressed disappointment that the Suez Canal Users' Association had not turned out to be the truly effective organisation he had expected. Nevertheless Dulles strongly urged him to keep the crisis out of the United Nations for the time being, on the grounds that taking it there would not be a fruitful move. Then he asked that should Eden decide to go to the Security Council, he would consult Dulles first.¹¹² On 22 September, while Dulles was flying back to Washington, the British and French, without first informing him, laid the situation before the Security Council.¹¹³ Now it was evident to the Eisenhower administration that the Allies were trying to bring the matter to an end quickly with a "Soviet veto" which would give them freedom of action.¹¹⁴ Dulles

111. RG 218 CJCS 091 Egypt, Joint Chiefs of Staff, memo. for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 7 August 1956; subject: Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company by the Egyptian government.

112. Finer, op.cit., p.261.

113. Aldrich, Dulles Oral History Collection, p.19. See also, Dulles papers, subject series, alphabetical sub. Box No.7, Suez problem: points to be raised with Macmillan, 25 September 1956.

114. Ibid., No.13.

conjectured that he might serve his country's interests by restraining his allies, and by acting as an honest broker between them and Nasser, while posing as their particular friend.

For the Egyptian leadership the chief objective was to maintain its hold on the Suez Canal Company against the opposition of Britain and France. Nasser therefore tried to exploit the American's attempt to restrain her allies from using force against Egypt. Although the American position as a whole was far from clear to Egypt, Egyptian diplomacy was directed at wooing the United States. Nasser gave the Americans a personal assurance that a "Soviet pilot would not be assigned to US vessels transiting the Canal".¹¹⁵ At the same time, he tried to exploit American fears of communist penetration in the area, especially in Saudi Arabia, in order to put pressure on the worried American administration. Through Nehru, Dulles and Eisenhower gained the impression that the Saudi regime was in grave danger "of a communist coup if its oil revenues should be denied or substantially reduced".¹¹⁶ Moreover, efforts to encourage a peaceful exchange between Egypt, Britain and France gave the American policy-makers an indication that he was ready for "negotiations if the opportunity arose".¹¹⁷

115. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower international series, Suez summary No.15, 24 September 1956.

116. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower international series, Suez summary No.13, 20 September 1956. Eisenhower's administration was well aware that the Saudi government "is feeble", see Dwight D. Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.5, folder, memo. of telephone conversations, telephone call from Secretary to Humphrey, 9 August 1956.

117. Ibid., summary No.20, 1 October 1956. The American embassy in Cairo informed the State Department that "the inclusion of Ali Sabri and Dr. Badawi, the Director of the Canal Authority, indicates that Nasser wishes the delegation to be prepared to set the basis for negotiations if opportunity arises".

The United Nations

Since it was obvious that Anglo-French military preparations had reached their peak, it was in the interests of the USA and Egypt to break the impasse and keep negotiations going. Anthony Nutting reports that Dulles advised Dr. Fawzi, the Egyptian foreign minister, to continue the talks at all costs.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, he urged him to make concrete proposals.¹¹⁹ According to Heikal, the Americans warned Egypt that Eden was in a highly unpredictable mood, and that made him ready to undertake the most dangerous of gambles.¹²⁰ In their efforts to alert Egypt to the danger of the situation, the Americans had leaked to the Egyptian ambassador the news that General Keightly had been chosen to command an invasion of Egypt.¹²¹

The American advice was considered by the Egyptians on 5 October. The Egyptian foreign minister proposed that direct negotiations between the parties could be held under the auspices of the United Nations. Moreover, on Nasser's instructions, Fawzi accepted the possibility that an international advisory board could enable Canal users to participate in matters of common interest.¹²² Furthermore, Egypt had shown a great willingness to compromise. On 12 October, Fawzi accepted Lloyd's six principles for the operation of the Canal "without exception",¹²³ and the Security Council adopted them on 13 October. These were:

118. Nutting, op.cit., p.156.

119. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower international series, summary No.36, 23 October 1956.

120. Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op.cit., p.29.

121. Ibid., p.105.

122. Love, op.cit., p.444.

123. Executive Session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vol.VIII, 84, Congress Second Session, Mr. Hoover, 12 November 1956, p.613.

- i) That there should be free and open transit through the Canal without discrimination, overt or covert.
- ii) Egyptian sovereignty to be respected.
- iii) The operation of the Canal should be insulated from the politics of any country.
- iv) The levels of dues should be fixed by agreement between users and owners.
- v) A fair proportion of the dues should be allotted to development.
- vi) Disputes to be settled by arbitration.¹²⁴

Egypt's moderate attitude led Eisenhower to believe that the danger of war was over. Making this premature assessment, he declared at a press conference that "It looks like there is a very great crisis behind us".¹²⁵

The British and the French, however, were still seeking a new pretext for attacking Nasser. They submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council that included a rider insisting that Egypt "had not yet formulated sufficiently precise proposals to meet the requirements of the six principles set above". They demanded, among other things, that Egypt should promptly submit proposals no less effective than those delivered by Menzies, which Nasser had already rejected. Moreover, Britain and France insisted that Egypt should co-operate with the SCUA to include the payment of tolls.¹²⁶

124. Lloyd, *op.cit.*, p.159.

125. Eisenhower press conference, 13 October 1956, quoted in *ibid.*, p.160.

126. Love, *op.cit.*, p.446.

In the Security Council the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia voted against that part of the Anglo-French resolution.¹²⁷ Still worried, Dulles reported to Eisenhower that Britain and France refused minor modifications that would have made their rider palatable. They felt they needed the above-mentioned veto for their political aims.¹²⁸ In order to make his delaying-tactics successful, Dulles pressed Fawzi to set out concrete proposals and suggestions within the context of the six principles.¹²⁹ On the other hand, he pointed out to his allies that the US had abandoned the principle of international control of the Canal.¹³⁰ It became clear that they were about to break the impasse. This appearance of success led Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to call the parties concerned to a meeting in Geneva on 29 October.

The War

Israel invaded the Sinai on the evening of 29 October 1956. The following day Britain and France, without informing the US, issued a joint ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to cease firing and to withdraw

127. Lloyd, *op.cit.*, p.169. The French and the British were insisting that "the Egyptian government make known promptly its proposals for a system meeting the requirements set out above and providing guarantees to users not less effective than those sought by the proposals of eighteen powers...", and considered that the "Canal Users' Association and the competent Egyptian authorities should co-operate to ensure the satisfactory operation of the Canal and free-and-open transit through the Canal in accordance with the 1888 Convention". For more details, see Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, p.104.

128. Love, *op.cit.*, p.446.

129. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower international series, Suez summaries, summary No.36, 23 October 1956.

130. RG 218, Record of the US JCS, top secret, Chapter X, The Suez Crisis, p.332, Vol.VI, 1955-1956.

to positions ten miles from the Suez Canal within twelve hours.¹³¹ Nasser rejected the ultimatum, and the French and British launched an attack against Egypt in collusion with Israel. They had found the excuse for which they had been desperately seeking to attack Nasser.¹³² Although the attack did not come as a surprise to American circles,¹³³ the American leadership was not prepared to accept that its allies could present the United States with a fait accompli, demanding her unlimited support. Eisenhower was shocked, and expressed concern over the possibility of Soviet intervention on the side of Egypt.¹³⁴ He considered that America's allies were giving the Soviet Union the chance to leapfrog over the Western military build-up in the area, and so threaten to undermine the American plan of containing Soviet penetration around the Canal.

Twelve hours after the Anglo-French ultimatum, Eisenhower declared to Eden and Mollet, "It is my belief that peaceful processes can and should prevail to secure a solution".¹³⁵ The American leadership's resentment was deepened by the sense of shock suffered in Washington. Secretary Dulles, in a telephone conversation with Vice-President Nixon, said, "They cannot count upon us to engage in these policies". Furthermore, he considered the American stance vis-a-vis its allies "a declaration of independence for the first time".¹³⁶

131. Love, op.cit., pp.481-491.

132. Nutting, op.cit., p.165; Meyer, op.cit., p.167.

133. Dulles Oral History Collection, Armstrong W. Park, p.19.

134. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower Diary, Box 19, staff memos., memo. of conversation, p.4 with the President, 30 October 1956; others present: Dulles, Hoover, etc., 30 October 1956. See also telephone call series, 30 October 1956, President and Dulles.

135. Eisenhower papers, international series, Box 19, Eden text, President's letter to Eden and Mollet, 31 October 1956.

136. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.5, telephone call from the Vice-President, 31 October 1956.

Publicly, President Eisenhower, in a nationwide broadcast on 31 October, emphasised not only America's non-involvement in the attack, but also its disapproval, "The United States was not consulted in any way about any phase of these actions, nor were we informed of them in advance...we believe these actions to have been taken in error, for we do not accept the use of force as a wise and proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes".¹³⁷

From the very beginning, when the issue was introduced to the United Nations, the American delegation showed a great regard for the opinion of the Afro-Asian countries.¹³⁸ Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge worked closely with these countries during the Suez war. The Arab delegations in the United Nations appreciated his stance in the midst of the dispute.¹³⁹

The main aim was to terminate hostilities and bring about the withdrawal of the attacking forces in the shortest possible time. The United States committed itself to the 1950 Tripartite Declaration. Under instructions from Dulles and Eisenhower, Ambassador Lodge took the lead in the United Nations Security Council, submitting his first proposal.¹⁴⁰ On 30 October Israel was called upon "to withdraw its

137. US Department of State Bulletin, 12 November 1956.

138. Aldrich, Dulles oral history collection, pp.34-5.

139. Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.6, incoming telegrams, Department of State, from New York to Secretary, 31 October 1956. Azzam Pasha, former Secretary-General of the Arab League said, "You have won a place in the hearts of all Arabs which they will never forget".

140. See Eisenhower Diary, Box 18, October 1956, phone calls, 30 October 1956, President and Secretary, File 3. The above-mentioned can be attributed to the American fears of Soviet military intervention to support Egypt. So Eisenhower told Dulles, "We think we should push ahead on our resolution".

armed forces behind the armistice lines", and all member states were urged to refrain from giving any military, economic or financial aid to Israel as long as it had not complied with this resolution.¹⁴¹ The United Kingdom and France vetoed the American proposal, and it became clear that Israel was acting as an instrument of the two European powers, which conflicted with the American policy of achieving peace in the area.

To some extent the Americans sided with Egypt against the aggressors. On 1 November in the General Assembly, where the final decisions were not subject to the veto, Secretary Dulles submitted a new proposal requesting an "immediate cease-fire" and prompt withdrawal of all forces behind the armistice lines. Dulles' resolution recommended that "all members refrain from introducing military goods in the area of hostilities". Moreover, it urged that once the cease-fire took effect, steps should be taken to reopen the Canal and restore secure navigation. At the end it requested the Secretary-General to observe and promptly report on the compliance, or lack of it, with this resolution to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The American resolution was adopted on 2 November by an overwhelming majority of 64 to 5.¹⁴² American pressure in the United Nations made its impact on the Anglo-French-Israeli situation. The Israeli government

141. See UN Documents S/37/0. See also Department of State Bulletin, 5 November 1956, p.699. See also Eisenhower Diary Series, Box No.19, White House staff memo., 30 October 1956. In Washington they began to think of holding up the Israeli bank balances. Dayan reports that Eisenhower telegraphed Ben-Gurion, suggesting that Israel should withdraw its forces from Sinai. See Dayan, The Story of My Life, p.254.

142. UN Document S/3256, General Assembly Resolution on Middle East. Also see Department of State Bulletin, 12 November 1956, "Statement by Secretary in the General Assembly", 2 November 1956.

considered that Dulles' second resolution was especially directed against them.¹⁴³ The Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal had a significant impact on the legitimacy of the British and French invasion, and marked a serious setback, particularly for the British government, which was trying to convince its people that the purpose of the Anglo-French military intervention was to keep the international waterway free and open. Now there could be no justification for the invasion. The American contribution in the UN, and Egyptian resistance, led to the failure of the main purpose of the invasion.

In order to contain the situation and put an end to any Soviet attempts to intervene, the United States government supported the Canadian resolution calling upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to submit a plan for setting up an international United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities.¹⁴⁴ This proposal was adopted on 4 November 1956, and the UNEF was created on the following day. The Canadian proposal was a face-saving formula to facilitate the Anglo-French withdrawal at minimum cost to Western interests in the area.

Some historians considered that the United States was not primarily engaged in solving the Middle Eastern problems in which it had become involved. The American policy-makers convinced themselves that they were saving the United Nations and building "a world without war".¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, American tactics in the United Nations can be attributed to

143. Dayan, *op.cit.*, p.266.

144. Department of State, US policy in the Middle East, September 1956-June 1957 documents, p.160.

145. Finer, *op.cit.*, p.440. Also see Dean Francis Wilcox, Assistant Secretary, Oral History Interview, Columbia University, Oral History Project, p.38.

their desire to put an end to Soviet attempts to assert their leadership in the UN, especially upon the newly-independent countries. Dulles realised that if the US did not take a firm stand against its allies in the United Nations, America no doubt "will share the fate of Britain and France".¹⁴⁶ In order to prevent this happening, the American government began to move in two political directions: it tried to assert its leadership in the UN by submitting its cease-fire proposal before the Soviet Union could seize the initiative;¹⁴⁷ also the United States was well aware that its hegemony in the Western European countries was under attack, because of its opposition to their military action against Egypt. So Eisenhower instructed Dulles not to condemn the aggressors but merely to call for a quick cease-fire. This was to be followed by deliberate action on the part of the United Nations to reach a solution to which all parties would adhere, by each making some concessions.¹⁴⁸

In seeking to limit the hostilities in the area, Eisenhower asked Eden on 1 November 1956 to announce his intention to resume negotiations concerning the operation of the Canal on the basis of the six principles which had been agreed by the United Nations, and linked the British evacuation with Israel's return to its territory and the Egyptian announcement of readiness to "negotiate on the basis of the six

146. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers (Ann Whitman file), NSC Box No.8, 302, meeting of NSC, 1 November 1956, p.5, Dulles to the members of the NSC.

147. Eisenhower Diaries, 31 October 1956, memo. of Conversation with President; other participants, Dulles, Col. Goodpaster, Eisenhower, "We plan to get there [the Security Council] first thing in the morning when the doors open before the USSR gets there".

148. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, White House memo. series, chronological sub-section, White House correspondence, from Eisenhower to Dulles, 2 November 1956, p.2.

principles as well".¹⁴⁹ But the American advice went unheeded.

The American initiative was launched at a moment when one side believed that its position was strong and improving, and the other was weak. Eden probably expected that with the passage of time his position would improve and he could achieve his ends. Thus there was nothing in the situation to induce him to be flexible or conciliatory towards Egypt.

The appearance of failure and the Anglo-French inflexibility led the American policy-makers to some extent to impose economic and oil sanctions against their allies.¹⁵⁰ This American pressure was not an end in itself. The United States was aiming to end the hostilities without further damaging Western interests in the area. On the other hand, Eisenhower (a former general) decided not to suspend any military assistance to his allies during the crisis. His bitterness did not lead him to forget his military commitments towards his NATO partners. So on 1 November he informed the members of the American National Security Council that "We should continue to send military supplies to Britain in order that she might meet her NATO requirements".¹⁵¹ Eisenhower tried to show his British allies that the temporary American sanctions against them would not lead to the disunity of the military powers of the NATO countries. He felt that the rift between him and his allies could be characterised as "a family fight".

149. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, international series, Eden, Box 19, Eisenhower to Eden, 11 November 1956.

150. Macmillan, *op.cit.*, pp.161-4. See also Lloyd, *op.cit.*, p.211.

151. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers as President, Ann Whitman file, NSC Box No.8, 302, meeting of NSC, 1 November 1956, p.10.

Further developments in the Suez crisis showed that the British and French depended on the United States for military support, especially in facing up to the possibility of a Soviet nuclear threat,¹⁵² even in a limited war. The equality of NATO members proved to be false, since the United States throughout the crisis tried hard to show its allies that they had become American satellites, and should work under American auspices and recognise their new role.¹⁵³

Although the fighting at Suez was over, the political manoeuvring was not. Britain, France and Israel still refused to accept a total withdrawal. In the meantime, Eisenhower won an overwhelming election victory which gave him a strong mandate to face up to his allies' intransigence. On 6 November the American leadership supported Hammarskjöld's efforts to get the Anglo-French forces completely out of Egypt.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, on the advice of the State Department, Eisenhower cancelled Eden's trip to Washington because, from his point of view, "It would be very unfortunate to have a communique issues which indicates we are in disagreement".¹⁵⁵ The United States was facing a delicate situation in handling the problem. The Israeli penetration in Sinai further complicated this state of affairs.

152. On 5 November the Soviet Union sent notes to Britain, France and Israel which implied the threat of nuclear intervention against them. See Department of State, US Policy in the Middle East, September 1956-June 1957, pp.183-8.

153. On 6 November, as a result of the Soviet ultimatum, Eisenhower informed his top aides that "...if the Soviets attack the French and the British directly, we would be at war". See Eisenhower Diary series, Box No.19, staff memos., memo. of conversation, 6 November 1956; others present: Goodpaster, Allen, Dulles, Hoover.

154. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers as President, Box 24, H. Lodge, Folder No.1, 1956, from Lodge to the President, 6 November 1956.

155. Also see international series, Box 19, Eden, 7 November 1956, Anthony Eden.

From the very beginning and before winning the election, Eisenhower adopted a tough attitude towards the Israeli invasion of Egyptian territory. Five days before the presidential election, he pointed out to one of his friends that "I gave strict orders to the State Department that they should inform Israel that we would handle our affairs exactly as though we did not have a Jew in America. The welfare and best interests of our own country were to be the sole criteria upon which we operated".¹⁵⁶

The American president tried very hard to diffuse Israel's high expectations regarding American support. While the Eisenhower administration was attempting to terminate the hostilities, Ben Gurion was exultant at Israel's victory. On 7 November he shocked international opinion by declaring the annexation of the Sinai desert to Israel. His determination to hold fast to Israel's territorial gain was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of his people's representatives in the Knesset.¹⁵⁷ The Israeli government assumed that Ben Gurion's declaration would be seen as a fait accompli by world opinion which it would be foolhardy to repudiate.

But the Eisenhower administration began to move rapidly to reverse this. Eisenhower immediately cabled Ben Gurion to state that the United States viewed his stand "with deep concern". He told Ben Gurion that Israel would "seriously undermine" United Nations peace efforts with such a policy, which, moreover, "could not but bring about

156. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, name series, Hazlett, personal, 2 November 194, quoted in Love, op.cit., pp.460, 639-40.

157. For more details see Department of State; United States Policy in the Middle East September 1956-June 1957, Documents, pp199-204, Department of State Publication No 6509 August 1957.

the condemnation of Israel as a violator of the principles as well as the directives of the United Nations".¹⁵⁸

Eisenhower's cable had been followed by Hoover's dire warning of possible consequences: UN condemnation, attack by Soviet "volunteers", and the termination of all US governmental and private aid.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, Ben Gurion's request to meet Eisenhower had been shelved until the Israelis "have withdrawn completely from Egyptian territory".¹⁶⁰ As a consequence of America's harsh warnings, Ben Gurion reluctantly informed Eisenhower that the Israelis would withdraw, contingent upon a satisfactory arrangement with UN forces being established.¹⁶¹

The Last Phase

Evidence exists to demonstrate that Britain, France and Israel repeatedly refused to accept a total withdrawal. As a result, the United States found itself on the side of the Afro-Asian and communist nations in the United Nations General Assembly, and supported the Indian resolution of 24 November, which once more called upon the invaders to withdraw their forces.¹⁶²

The Eisenhower administration tried to ease its way out of the dilemma by coaxing its allies to comply with the United Nations resolutions, thus easing the oil shortage which undoubtedly had caused

158. Love, op.cit., p.641. Also see Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, 8 November 1956, US Department of State, US Policy in the Middle East 1956-June 1957.

159. Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy, p.286.

160. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, international series, Box 29, folder, Israel, Thursday, 8 November 1956.

161. Message to Eisenhower from Ben Gurion, 8 November 1956, see US Department of State, US Policy in the Middle East, September 1956-June 1957, p.213.

162. Brecher, op.cit., p.292.

"hardship through lack of adequate heating and unemployment at the start of winter".¹⁶³ On 3 December 1956, the British and French governments agreed to a total withdrawal. Israel, however, was fighting for different reasons from the French and British, so coaxing her to abandon her territorial gains proved a difficult task.¹⁶⁴

In the meantime, Egypt had made the reopening of the Canal contingent on Israel's total withdrawal from its territory.¹⁶⁵ The United States and its allies needed the Canal to be opened as soon as possible to avoid economic setbacks. Eisenhower threatened Nasser, "...If they do not do better, the whole weight of the US will be against him".¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the reopening of the Suez Canal was not the most important factor behind the United States' attitude towards Israel's non-compliance with the UN's withdrawal resolution. Rather, the American leadership was keen to avoid any possibility of Egypt's opposing America's new programme in the Middle East.¹⁶⁷ Under the banner of Arab nationalism, conditions were ripe for someone like Nasser to reassert his leadership, especially after such an unequal confrontation.¹⁶⁸

Israeli intransigence would provide Egypt with an ideal opportunity to draw most of the Arab countries into its orbit.¹⁶⁹ While increasing

163. White House office of the staff sec. records, folder, State Department (5), draft reply to Mollet, 27 November 1956.

164. The Israeli leaders accepted only a partial withdrawal from Sinai, and refused to relinquish control over Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh, see Brecher, *op.cit.*, pp.289-97.

165. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.5, folder October-December 1956, telephone call to Lodge.

166. Interview with Ahmad Husayn Pasha.

167. The American President contacted Nasser about the US Middle East programme (the Eisenhower doctrine) in December 1956. See Dulles papers, special ass. chronological series, Box No.11, 19 December 1956, NEA Mr. Rountree.

168. New York Times, 17 November 1956.

169. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, central files, official files 611 LL Box 594, 116 LL Middle East, Suez situation, 31 October 1956, telegram message Saud to Eisenhower. King Saud warned Eisenhower of the consequences of Israeli aggression.

Nasser's prestige and popularity among the Arab populace, this plan could also be considered by Nasser as the most promising way out of his difficulties.

Apart from Nasser's role in Arab affairs, American policy-makers viewed the Israeli delay as a significant factor in promoting tension in the Near-East, which had "impaired efforts to work towards the achievement of a lasting solution to the problems which provoked the Near East crisis".¹⁷⁰ Confronted with the above, the American leadership began to move to put an end to Israel's political manoeuvring. Eisenhower wrote to Ben Gurion on 3 February urging Israel to complete its withdrawal. He ended with a stern warning, "That such continued ignoring of the UN resolution would almost surely lead to the invoking of further UN procedures which could seriously disturb the relations between Israel and other member nations including the United States".¹⁷¹

At the same time, Secretary Dulles had informed Tel Aviv in a confidential memorandum that the United States would support the principle of free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba and that the UNEF would be stationed in Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh.¹⁷² Israel did not accept the aide memoire.¹⁷³

Israel intransigence led Eisenhower's administration to try to avoid appearing soft towards any aggression. The administration was well aware that a successful Arab UN resolution advocating economic sanctions against

170. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, international series, Box 29, folder 3, outgoing telegram from Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, 3 February 1957.

171. Ibid.

172. Nutting, op.cit., pp.189-90.

173. Brecher, op.cit., p.297.

Israel was imminent.¹⁷⁴ The United States had to be firm with Israel in order to maintain its good relations with the Arab world. Eisenhower had also been successful in weakening Israeli attempts to manipulate the Jewish lobby by making a direct appeal to the American people above the heads of the pressure groups. On 20 February Eisenhower went on national television and delivered a tough message to Israel, declaring that "the United Nations has no choice but to exert pressure upon Israel to comply with withdrawal resolutions".¹⁷⁵ He reiterated the same position in a private message to Ben Gurion.¹⁷⁶ In the end Israel yielded to these pressures and inducements. By 7 March 1957 Israel troops moved out of the Sinai and Gaza strip.¹⁷⁷ The most important outcome of the conflict for Israel interests was the right of free navigation through the Gulf of Aqaba, which was vital to Israel's economy.

From the very beginning the Egyptian regime had accepted the harsh reality that its friendship with the Soviet Union would not deter the invaders. They understood firstly that the Soviet military presence in the Middle East was non-existent, and secondly that the Soviet Union's geo-political influence was minimal, due to the great distance separating it from Egypt.¹⁷⁸ All of this had been confirmed from the moment of the tripartite invasion, when the Soviet leaders made it clear to Nasser through President Quwatly of Syria, who was in Moscow at the time, that

174. Love, op.cit., p.667.

175. Department of State, The US Middle East Policy, pp.301-7.

176. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers as President, international series, Box 29, Folder 2, Israel, from Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, 20 February 1957.

177. Love, op.cit., p.670.

178. Mohamed Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op.cit., pp.70-1. See also Love, op.cit., p.557.

Egypt should not expect any Soviet intervention to end the crisis, and that the conflict should be resolved through diplomatic and political channels.¹⁷⁹ It was difficult for the Soviet strategists to alter their political priorities from the existing problems in Eastern Europe, which was their own sphere of influence, to the Middle East crisis. Unlike the Soviet Union, the United States had its Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean,¹⁸⁰ and had the means to impose effective economic pressures upon the invading powers.

Nasser perceived Egypt's precarious position, knowing full well that only the support of a great power could assure its survival under his leadership. Consequently Nasser turned to Eisenhower on the first day of the tripartite invasion, asking for American military aid to stop the aggression.¹⁸¹ The Egyptian request did not surprise American political circles, as they had previously received an intelligence report confirming that "neither Egypt nor the USSR is ready to accept the risks of military alliance at this time. Our continued estimate is that the USSR would make every effort to avoid direct involvement in the event of Western military action against Nasser".¹⁸²

Nevertheless, the Egyptian request was unrealistic, because its leadership had overestimated its influence. It did not understand one important factor, that any American intervention against its allies

179. See Heikal, *Nasser: the Cairo Documents*, op.cit., p.142. Also interview with Fathi Radwan, Cairo, and Mustefa Amin, Cairo.

180. J.C. Wylie, "The Sixth Fleet and American Diplomacy", in Hurewitz (ed.), *Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East*, pp.55-6. See also Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower record as President, White House central file, incoming telegram to Secretary from Hare, 31 October.

181. Interview with R. Hare, Washington, D.C., 4 November 1983.

182. RG 218 h JCS 091 memo. for Chairman JCS, subject, Nasser's alleged attempt to obtain Soviet mutual defence agreement, no date.

would mean the end of the NATO alliance, leading to the destruction of Western unity vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. In terms of cold-war politics, Egypt miscalculated the prerequisites regarding the possibility of any American military interference, but on the other hand Egypt's invitation gave the United States a mandate to handle the situation on behalf of both sides. By this move the Eisenhower administration scored a major psychological victory, thus compensating for its previous failure in handling Middle Eastern problems.

As expected, the American response indicated a willingness to help Egypt only within the framework of the United Nations.¹⁸³ As has been seen, these American efforts to halt the war and force the invaders to withdraw went well beyond the limits of that promise. From the very beginning Nasser did his best to woo the United States. He sent Mustefa Amin, the well-known Egyptian journalist, clandestinely with a personal message to Dulles. In this message Nasser assured the United States that he would oppose communism and would not take a hostile attitude towards American interests in the area. Moreover, he demonstrated his readiness to reconsider his policy towards Israel.¹⁸⁴

Egyptian diplomacy now moved in three directions. It reinforced its links with the United States. It tried hard to create a split between the United States and its allies.¹⁸⁵ Finally it did its utmost

183. Interview with R. Hare, Washington, D.C.

184. Interview with Mustefa Amin, Cairo, 14 January 1985.

185. For example, in Nasser's message to Eisenhower on 3 November, Nasser wrote that for the first time he realised that the USA was not simply playing the British game in the area. See Eisenhower Diaries, Box No.19, folder November 1956, memo. of conversation with President, 3 November 1956. Moreover, Nasser asked Serraj of Syria not to blow up the pipeline because of America's stance. See Heikal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents, op.cit., pp.111-2.

to allay American fears that Egypt would allow the Soviet Union to increase its influence within the country. Nasser assured Ambassador Hare that "Egypt has had a long struggle to get rid of foreign domination, and did not intend to repeat that experience".¹⁸⁶ Moreover, the Egyptian leadership informed the American government that it "did not want volunteers from the Soviet Union".¹⁸⁷

The position adopted by the Egyptian leadership at the very beginning of the crisis showed that there were wide divergencies between Egypt's official policies on the one hand and Egypt's real objectives on the other. Egypt had in reality abandoned its previous claim of "non-alignment", and demonstrated its readiness to put itself under the protection of one of the two super-powers. The political priorities which promote the concept of "non-alignment" are thus seen not to be viable in small countries during a time of crisis.

The most important thing about the Suez crisis is that its consequences, both in regional and global terms, were vast and far-reaching. Egypt, the victim of the aggression, with world public opinion on its side, and with Soviet-American moral support, had turned its military defeat into a political victory. Nasser's prestige had never been so great, and he had gained influence in the Arab world, contrary to the intentions of Britain and France.¹⁸⁸ Throughout most of the crisis, Arab oil became a major force to be reckoned with in Middle East politics.

186. Eisenhower papers, Dulles-Herter series, Box No.6, from Cairo (Hare) to Secretary of State, Department of State, incoming telegram, 8 November 1956.

187. Eisenhower Diary series, staff memos., staff note No.44, 23 November 1956. Also Dulles papers, telephone call series, Box No.5, folder October-December 1956, telephone call to Ambassador Lodge, 26 December 1956.

188. See Eisenhower Diaries, Box 19, November 1959, memo. of Conversation with President, Secretary Hoover, Col. Goodpaster, November 1956.

The lesson to be drawn from the Suez crisis and the resulting oil shortage was that global policy could hinge on attitudes and decisions by local powers, as long as the conditions were suitable,¹⁸⁹ and that was obvious in the 1973 energy crisis.

For Britain it was hard to turn the clock back. The domineering style of nineteenth-century diplomacy proved her downfall. In the course of the war, Britain had shifted from impartiality to conspiring with Israel, which was a surprise even to Nasser. Britain's position in the region was diminished rather than enhanced. She lost her treaty rights in Egypt, and found that even her relations with the Baghdad Pact countries had deteriorated.¹⁹⁰ The British invasion of Egypt had finally undermined the pro-Western regimes in the area. Soon afterwards, in 1958, the Iraqi regime fell, and subsequently followed Egypt's example by turning to the Soviet Union for aid and arms.

The Suez crisis was a turning-point in the history of the Middle East. It provided the historical circumstances for the new national leaders to enhance their prestige and popularity. The very purpose of the Baghdad Pact, i.e., to contain the Soviet Union, had become a questionable undertaking. It was not the Soviet Union that had attacked Egypt; on the contrary, the Soviet Union had supported Egypt against one of the founding members of the Baghdad Pact.

189. See Princeton University, John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, p.28, Mr. Humphrey, "We learned in the first twenty-four hours that they could not last...a week or two, their oil would not last them any longer".

190. See Eisenhower Diary series, Box No.19, October 1956, staff memos. 29 October. Also J. Hurewitz (ed.), Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East, "Origin of the Rivalry", pp.10-14.

No longer, after Suez, could the West assert that it was the sole exponent and champion of man's aspirations for a just world. Through its commitments and actions during the crisis, the United States tried hard to salvage Western prestige and influence which had been badly tarnished by the invasion. From this time on, the American government assumed the role of the sole legitimate guardian of Western interests in the area, against Soviet attempts to penetrate the region.

Although during the crisis Eisenhower did his best to keep the Conservatives in power in Britain, he was nevertheless a pragmatist when he forced Eden to accept his own historical limitations, and not to try "to be bigger than he is". In Eisenhower's view, Eden was still acting in the manner of the "Victorian period".¹⁹¹

For the West the Suez war marked the end of collective responsibility by the three Western powers for Soviet containment in the Middle East. It became apparent that Britain and France were no longer the dominant powers in the region; their dependence on the United States was evident to all. The Suez war confirmed that major changes had occurred. From 1956 onwards the Soviet-Western rivalry in the Arab-Israeli zone had thus been transformed into a Soviet-American rivalry. This consequence was more clearly shown in January 1957, when Eisenhower outlined the new American initiative to fill the vacuum created by the Anglo-French withdrawal from Egypt.

191. Eisenhower Diary series, Box No.20, November 1956, from Eisenhower to General Alfred Gruenther, Supreme Commander, personal, 2 November 1956.

This shift in the balance of power had its impact upon the regional structure. The decline of British influence led the United States to look for an Arab leader with the qualifications to lead this area under the banner of pan-Islamism, as a counterweight to Nasser. King Saud was a logical choice in this regard, because he at least, in Eisenhower's view, "professed anti-communism and enjoyed on religious grounds a high standing among all Arab nations".¹⁹²

This policy demonstrated the obvious fact that, despite Nasser's popularity, the American policy-makers since 1953 did not view Egypt as a protagonist of the Arab world or as the cornerstone in their strategy. Nasser, as regional leader, believed that the Suez crisis had proved that Arab nations under his leadership could defend themselves from any external pressures. The United States, however, took the opposite view, which was that no one Arab state or leader was capable to taking upon itself the leadership of the entire region. Apparently American-Egyptian relations during this period improved to the point of cordiality, but this cordiality did not last for long.¹⁹³

The central issue for the United States as global power was the containment of communist penetration in the Middle East. For Nasser, asserting Egypt's political hegemony over the entire Arab world was his foremost aim, thereby displacing Iraq under Nuri es-Said.

192. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, op.cit., pp.114-6.

193. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower records as President, central file, Box No.72, State Department incoming telegrams, Department of State from Cairo to Secretary of State, 5 November 1956. Ambassador Hare reported that, "I am now convinced that as far as Egypt and possible other Arab states are concerned, the US has suddenly emerged as a real Champion of Right".

Yet Nasser deceived himself, not realising that neither he nor Nuri was qualified to be the Grand Master of the Middle Eastern chessboard under the new American rules. The American policy-makers never forgot that Nasser's policy gave the Soviet Union a golden chance to move their chessmen over the Western defences into the heart of the Arab world.

CONCLUSION

United States-Egyptian relations during the period from 1952 to 1956 were marked by the failure of both Nasser and John Foster Dulles to reach a proper understanding of each other's goals, aspirations and political circumstances.

One of the major priorities in the understanding of these particular relations has to be Egypt's emergence as a leader among developing countries in which - like most other Third World countries - the decision-making powers are usually concentrated in the hands of one individual. This particular individual is, to a large extent, the final arbiter in all major policy-making; consequently, Egyptian foreign policy too has reflected the political attitudes of solitary individuals whoever they may be.

From 1952 up to September 1970, Egypt was under the control of Nasser's charismatic personality. He represented the spearhead to power of Egypt's urban lower middle class whose ascendancy was initiated by the military coup d'etat of 1952. This particular class displaced the more traditional landed aristocracy and upper middle classes which had dominated Egyptian politics since the 1919 revolution. Nasser's challenge to his political predecessors, and especially to the popular leader of the Wafd Party, Moustafa el-Nahas, was based mainly on ideological grounds; yet both espoused the idea that Egypt was not merely a state on the banks of the Nile, but a major part of the greater Arab nation. Egyptian pan-Arabism became Nasser's focal point in his political ambitions. He also used it as a diversionary tactic to draw attention away from Egypt's internal problems.

Like most of his predecessors, Nasser was a prisoner of Egypt's geo-political realities in the Middle East, always having to take into account Egypt's

pivotal role in the Arab world. Nasser accepted wholeheartedly Egypt's centrality, believing that in this way he could ensure his leadership in Egypt and Egypt's pre-eminence within the Arab world.

Turning from Egypt's role in the Arab world under Nasser to American attitudes towards these developments, we find that, at the very beginning the US did help Nasser to achieve his goals in various ways. Nevertheless, there was an area of conflict between the US and Nasser after 1953, when, on visiting the Middle East, John Foster Dulles formulated a policy which assumed that Egypt should abandon its plans for Arab leadership and instead work within the Western framework of regional state alliances. Dulles and the American government expected Egypt, as a major Arab country, to set an example and be the first Arab state to make peace with Israel. To America it was of the utmost importance that all Arab countries should evolve into active participants of a Western defence strategy and limit "the Red Peril", Soviet expansionism, in the Middle East. To a large extent Nasser accepted the American strategy in the area by concluding the 1954 agreement with the United Kingdom on terms favoured by the West, even though it could have cost him his leadership if not his life, as manifested in the attempt on his life by the Muslim Brethren in October 1954. For Nasser this was to be a trial period in his relationship with the West, especially the United States.

Such a pro-Western attitude, at a critical time in his career, was justified on two grounds: first, he felt that by adopting such a policy he would be able to get American economic and military support, which would enhance his position in Egypt as well as in the Arab world. Second, Nasser believed that by taking a more moderate stance towards the West, the US would reconsider its previous hostile attitude towards Egypt's hegemonistic

ambitions over the Arab world. However, Nasser's briefly moderate attitude in external policy did not bear fruit, for the US rejected Nasser's ambitions for Egypt's leadership in the Arab world, shifting its priorities to the "Northern Tier" strategy to counteract new world developments and to escalate the Cold War between East and West.

The American-Iraqi arms deal in April 1954 confirmed this new shift in American strategy, convincing Nasser that the Americans were not much different from the British in their relations with the Arab world. The American policy-makers - like the British - had placed more weight and trust on Nuri es-Said of Iraq and the traditional elite and less on the new nationalist leaders like Nasser. As for the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Eisenhower administration influenced Nasser's political priorities by making it a central issue in reinforcing America's strategic role in the Arab world, an issue that had to be resolved through a peaceful settlement. Eisenhower and Dulles thought that this new shift in foreign policy in the Middle East was the only way to limit growing Soviet influence in the area, meanwhile, it would be formulating a military alliance of all the Arab countries in the Middle East under the auspices of the West.

The main weakness in America's policy-making in the Middle East was that it tried to impose its own views of the geo-political realities of the area, without taking into account, for example, Arab public opinion and its suspicion of Israel's territorial ambitions. Similarly, the American administration could not comprehend the fact that most Arab countries, especially Egypt, saw no immediate threat from the Soviet Union and the communist bloc.

The events of 1955, for example, the formation of the Baghdad Pact and the Gaza raid by Israel, introduced awesome problems in the power politics

of the Middle East, especially in the relations between Egypt and the US. Nasser finally had to accept that his moderate policies towards the West and Israel would have to be terminated and a more aggressive strategy towards them would have to be initiated as soon as possible. He felt betrayed by the West, and realised that he had been used as a tool for accomplishing Western strategy, especially that of the US. He felt he had to confront them on their own terms, in a more forceful and even radical way, finding the Soviet Union a willing partner to further his aims. Nevertheless, Nasser still left his options open regarding his relations with the US. As Allen Dulles stated at the time, "If he [Nasser] can maintain his independence and prestige through an arrangement with the West, he would prefer that to a close tie-up with the Soviets".¹

This change of policy by Nasser not only did not carry any serious risk of retaliation by the West, but it also raised him in the eyes of the Arabs to the status of the greatest Arab leader in modern times.

Nasser tried to kill two birds with one stone. He wanted to show American policy-makers, especially John Foster Dulles, that the American decision to go with the "Northern Tier" strategy was not a workable solution to American interests in the area; on the contrary, it would create great disharmony in the local balance of power. He was also keen to stress the point that Egypt should no longer be viewed as merely a minor state, but as the embodiment of the Arab ideal of the future. The Americans failed to grasp Egypt's or Nasser's intentions, maintaining that it was the Israeli raid on Egypt in February 1955 that had undermined American-Egyptian relations.

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Dulles papers, White House, memo. from Allen Dulles to John Foster Dulles, undated.

Basically, the Americans came short of noticing that there was a conflict between Cairo and Baghdad, and that the balance of Arab power was now shifting towards Egypt and its allies. From 1955 onwards, Washington was to face the hard fact that the "honeymoon" with Nasser and his regime was over and the time had come for more realistic and consequently tougher policy. This challenge was particularly difficult for Secretary Dulles who had viewed the relations with Egypt in terms of East-West Cold War policies, and this can be easily attributed to McCarthyist influence during that time and the great zeal of the right wing of the Republican Party to condemn communism wherever it was. Therefore, once Nasser had concluded an arms deal with the Eastern bloc in September 1955, Secretary Dulles' suspicions increased, viewing it as a communist conspiracy and not as Nasser's nationalist priorities to maintain Egypt's national security.

Dulles's narrow-minded interpretation of Nasser's moves made him adopt a new stance towards Egypt. Dulles had always tried to impose his own frame of reference on Egypt, a fixed pattern that would best serve America's interests in the area. Yet no one could blame Dulles for political misjudgment in such a political context, since the US, like all great powers, was accustomed to interpret policies of weaker states through their own prism of particular interests and preferences. American policy-makers thought that vast economic aid to Egypt, especially with the financing of the Aswan Dam, would entitle them to influence Egyptian foreign policy. Although this thesis of power politics was basically correct, it failed to take into account the extent to which Nasser fashioned Egypt's foreign policy by his own views and ambitions.

The failure of the Anderson Mission in March 1956 to settle the Egyptian-Israeli dispute as a prerequisite to financing the Aswan Dam, completely undermined the context of communication between Nasser and Dulles, a framework that assumed conflicts of interest, but kept them within manageable limits so as to allow for diplomatic relations.

Before making a critical decision, Nasser, as a political leader - rais - used to assess all its implications with respect to Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. Dulles, on the other hand, evaluated all matters according to how they kept pace with American general strategy in containing Soviet expansion. Consequently, Dulles saw Nasser as an extension of Russian penetration in the Middle East, as well as an obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Accordingly, the American administration decided to contain Nasser's influence and to manipulate all possible means to weaken his position as a potential Third World leader.

This particular American policy proved to be counterproductive, for by withdrawing American economic support for the Aswan Dam, the Americans did not only promote Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, but also enhanced his leadership in the Arab world.

Contrary to what was widely expected, US-Egyptian relations during the Suez crisis improved, and there were signs of a reconciliation under way. However, Dulles seemed to waver between a desire to better his relations with Nasser and the belief that Nasser was an extremely dangerous fanatic. Secretary of State Dulles was caught on the horns of a dilemma, for neither recent experience nor relevant historical analogies could resolve his scope of choices. The object of the American stance during the Suez crisis was neither to enhance Nasser's prestige nor undermine her allies, but to protect

Western interests in the long term as an indication of its dominant position. They realised that any wishful thinking was not practical if correlated with concrete historical circumstances. Therefore, its strong stand against its allies' ambitions for the Suez Canal did not permit the Soviet Union to exploit the contradictions politically.

Paradoxically, documentary and other evidence for the research show that before and during the Suez crisis, Nasser made endless efforts to find a reasonable framework of communication that could lead to an improvement in his relations with the US. At the same time, Nasser did not comprehend that American foreign policy in the 1950s, and especially under Dulles, viewed communist expansionism as the main threat to international stability and Western global interests. Similarly he did not realise that, although American foreign policy was Dulles' own political domain, its formulation was also greatly influenced by the American Congress, American public opinion, and the various pressure groups within America's political structure.

Unfortunately, Nasser's nationalist aims for Egypt and for the Arab world distorted his image as a moderate ally in the eyes of the American policy-makers, and especially of John Foster Dulles. In the same context, Dulles' lack of understanding of Arab political thinking and the reality of Arab political life, further undermined any productive bilateral relations between the two sides. In general, it could be said that the major factor in the American failure to maintain an adequate modus vivendi with Egypt, which from 1952 to early 1955 was considered as a potential ally, was America's eagerness to impose her frame of political reference unilaterally regardless of the historical or political circumstances of Egypt. This American failure turned Nasser from a local leader in Egypt into the charismatic leader of the Arab world, and a leading political figure in the Third World.

All in all, US-Egyptian relations between the 1952 revolution and the Suez crisis of 1956, represented the epitome of a conflict between the interests and needs of a growing regional power - Egypt - and those of an established Western global power - the US.

Nasser tried to diminish any foreign influence in the area, believing that the Arab=collective security system was the only valid answer to the area defence problems, in which Egyptian hegemony could be assured. The Americans did not perceive that by assisting Nasser to achieve his regional aims, they would also serve their long-term objectives with regard to East-West relations.

For the American policy-makers the lesson was not learnt.

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